No. 688.) For Week Ending March 8th. 1902. (One Penny.

SHORT STORIES

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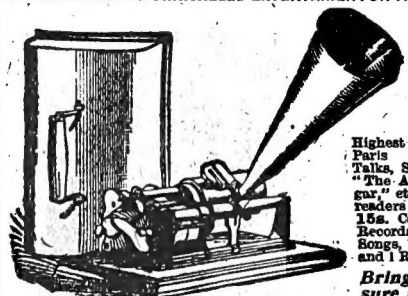

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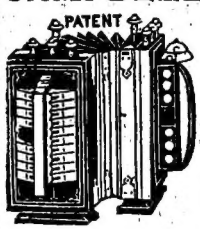

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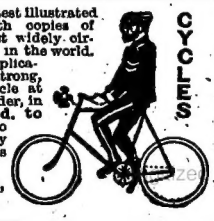

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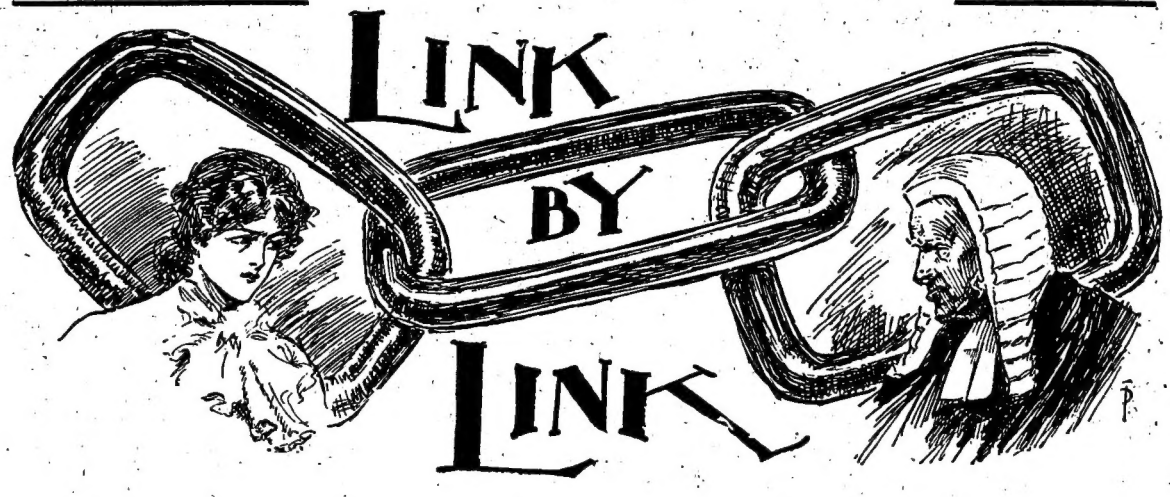

CHAPTER I.

A Strange Meeting and an Escape.

"GOOD-NIGHT, porter!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The big gate of Moulstone Asylum closed with a dull clang as Gerald Mortimer strode out into the road leading to Moulstone village. It was late. Dinner with his friend Dr. Branksome and one or two others of the asylum medical staff had killed the evening hours enjoyably, and the doctor's well-selected whisky and cigars had served to prolong the merry meeting to almost midnight.

At the Manor House a mile and a half away—beyond the village—Mrs. Mortimer and the rest of the household would have retired by now, and so Gerald swung leisurely along. The night was fine, lit by the moon and countless stars, and in spite of a crispness born of a January frost, the air was pleasant and exhilarating.

All around him the country spread like a huge, elongated dish, he surveying it from the vantage ground of a sloping rim. Typical Kentish country, hills and valleys, with hedgerows trailing through fields like velvet ribbons, and the little river Kel winding in the moonlight like a silver serpent among the low-lying meadows. Here and there in the valley a spot of yellow light showed where a household kept late vigil, while ahead, some three miles, a rising glow located the massed lamps of Kelbridge, the nearest town.

The phrases of a sweet melody from Faust ran through Gerald's brain as he traversed the long white road that led from the asylum, and his lips formed themselves for a low whistle.

But his whistling and his walk were both suddenly arrested.

From a point at the roadside where the tall, thick-set hedge was broken by a gate guarding a cart-track across a common, there issued an apparition! Or if not an apparition, a figure that suggested one.

The figure of a woman, tall and gaunt, dressed in a long cloak of faded blue, with eyes that seemed to burn dully like live coals growing cool. Swiftly she came with a lithe, gliding movement, right to the middle of the road, and as she moved, Gerald Mortimer could see those weird eyes of hers moving restlessly in their distended sockets. His sense of startled wonderment gave place to one of pity as he noticed her face, white and drawn with suffering.

Fearlessly she approached, right in his path. He stopped, waiting! She placed her hands upon his shoulders and peered at his face so closely, that he could feel her breath upon his cheek, and see those dull red eyes within a few inches of his.

As she thus gazed the woman's tongue found utterance—half-moan, half-whispered words.

Gerald Mortimer gently removed her hands from his shoulders. The hands were deathly cold.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he said. "But what do you want?"

The woman looked at him a moment and shrank back.

"Not you," she said, again with that strange moaning sound, "not you. I thought you were—— But he has not come. He will come! I must wait—wait."

She shivered again, and made as if to return to her resting place by the gate.

"What is it?" he asked kindly. "Who is it you are expecting?"

Once more she turned her dull-red eyes upon her questioner. Then she went on, unheeding his question.

"He will come—he may be here presently, and if not to-night, why then to-morrow. I must wait—wait always."

The thought had come to Gerald that this poor creature was demented, perhaps had escaped from the asylum, though that was hardly possible, since his friend Dr. Branksome would surely have mentioned it.

"You cannot wait here," he said; "it is nearly midnight, and you are cold and weary. Come with me to my mother's house till the morning."

She shrank further from him, and almost shrieked:

"No, no, no! My place is here. I must wait."

"But you will be better for a rest," he urged. "Come with me!"

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Her mood demanded silence and solitude, and she did not reply. Instead she swung round with sudden quickness and passed through the gate on to the common beyond. Then at a pace that surprised Gerald Mortimer, she sped along the cart-track.

Irresolute, Gerald gazed after her, his brain in conflict with itself. He had no right to detain this woman, and yet—she was in distress! What if she were demented, as she certainly seemed? In such an event harm might easily come to her alone and uncontrolled, in that lonely by-way. He must try once more to persuade her.

He pushed open the gate. The track dipped and rose among the furze of the common. The flutter of the woman's cloak among the undulations met his eye for a second. He started in pursuit. But she was too far ahead. A wood, thick with brown ferns and dying undergrowth loomed ahead. He saw that cloaked form stop for a moment at the edge; there was a bobbing appearance as of a jump across a narrow ditch, and then he saw her no more. The wood had swallowed her up.

Gerald raced to the border of the wood. But the tangled brambles defied his sight. No sign of life could he see. He listened for the snapping of a twig that might furnish a clue to the woman's whereabouts, but no sound reached his ear save the soft and melancholy sighing of the wind. He skirted the wood each way for a hundred yards, listening and peering at every few paces. But eyes and ears were still defied. The wood seemed dead.

Reluctantly he retraced his steps, pursuit being useless. He regained the wood and strode homewards. And even now, whenever an odd sound struck upon his ear, he would catch his breath and turn round to listen and look back along the road he had traversed.

His walk to the Manor House was beset with those conditions of melancholy solitude in which the imagination ever finds the freest play. His brain whirled with strange fancies in which there always appeared the cloaked woman with the wondrous eyes. And even after he had ascended to his room and had got into bed, the haunting vision of those eyes of fire pursued him through a series of eerie dreams.

* * * * *

At breakfast the next morning he was taciturn and depressed. The memory of his encounter with the strange woman, trivial as seemed its direct import to him, rested on his mind like a dead weight, and left him with a gloomy foreboding of future evil. Vague enough his apprehensions were, and unfounded when his reason examined them, but like most others of us, Gerald sometimes had moments when instinct superseded and ruled reason. This was one of them. To his mother and young sisters, who, with himself, comprised the widowed household, he spoke scarcely a word beyond the usual formalities during breakfast.

Even towards the slight, fair girl with the beautiful hair and violet eyes, who sat quietly conversing with the little Mortimer girls, whose governess she was, he showed a disinclination to talk. Which was strange, for, during the few weeks that Nina Penhurst had been in the house, he had shown a desire to look upon her and talk to her on every possible occasion. So much so that already the tongues of the gossips were busy in the kitchen and village, and the opinion that the "handsome Gerald Mortimer" and "beautiful Miss Penhurst" would make a match of it, generally held. An opinion, which had Gerald been the only one to consult, might have been speedily proved. But of that more anon.

Meantime, he sat silent and preoccupied, eating very little breakfast. But even as they entered upon the marmalade stage, the parlourmaid appeared.

Excitement could be read in Mary's face, and her hurried words to Mrs. Mortimer bore out the reading.

"If you please, ma'am, Danvers has just brought the news that one of the lunatics has escaped from the asylum."

Gerald sprang from his chair.

"Lunatic escaped! When did it happen?" There was a ring of almost fierceness in his demand.

"Last night, sir, so Danvers says, but he wasn't missed till this morning."

"*He*—it's a man then. Why did you say it was a woman?" Gerald was quite irritable.

"I beg your pardon, sir," replied the maid. "I'm sure I didn't know I'd said such a thing."

"No, Gerald," said Mrs. Mortimer, turning to her son in surprise. "Mary said nothing about its being a woman."

"I'm sorry," Gerald said hurriedly. "It was my mistake." He flushed as he mentally traced to its source the cause of his supposition that the escaped lunatic was a woman.

Breakfast was practically finished, and he covered his obvious confusion by rising and excusing himself.

"I should like to see Danvers," he explained. "I was with Dr. Branksome last night, you know, and he knew nothing about it then. The escape must have occurred after that."

His thoughts were in a fresh turmoil as he sought out Danvers, the under-gardener. Somehow he could not detach the news of the escape from his encounter with that woman of the previous night. In some mysterious manner the two things were connected. Of that he felt convinced. But in what way?

The gardener could help him little towards the answer to that question. Danvers had only heard, as he passed the lodge gates, the bare news that a man had escaped in the night, and that search parties were being organised.

"That's all I knows about it, sir," the gardener concluded. "But no doubt they can tell you more up at the 'sylum."

To the asylum Gerald at once made his way.

"Yes, it's perfectly true, Mortimer," replied Dr. Branksome, whom Gerald had promptly sought out. "A man has escaped, and the warders are scouring the neighbourhood for him now."

"Is it a dangerous case?" Gerald asked.

"No: and that's the extraordinary part of the business. This man, Felix Cordelvin, was one of the quietest patients here. He never gave any trouble, and was the last person in the world I should have expected to bolt."

"Is he young or old?"

"Oldish—nearly sixty. He's as sane as you or I on most things, but labours under the delusion that Felix isn't his name. Thinks it's Anthony Cordelvin, and imagines he has been done out of a lot of property in the past."

"Any grounds for his delusion?"

"None at all. But you seem very interested, Mortimer."

"Do I?" replied Gerald. "Well, perhaps I am. When I first heard of this escape I thought it was a woman."

"A woman? What suggested such a possibility?"

"An adventure I had last night."

"Last night! But you were here till nearly twelve."

"Yes, I know. It was after that."

"You pique my curiosity."

"Well, I'll gratify it." And in a few words, Gerald told Dr. Branksome of his encounter of the previous night.

"She was a woman of about fifty," he concluded, "and was evidently expecting somebody. Isn't it possible that she was in some way connected with Cordelvin?"

"It's possible, of course, though I never heard of the escaped man having any friends. However, if the men

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fail to find Cordelvin it may be necessary for you to inform the police. Your adventure was certainly a singular one. It is hardly usual to find a lady roaming about alone at midnight."

Gerald Mortimer left his friend soon after that and returned home.

That load which had been upon his mind since the previous night was still there—that strange foreboding of evil seemed rather to grow with the hours.

But it lightened when, on entering the garden at the rear of the Manor House, he caught sight of Nina Penhurst. The sight of that girlish figure and beautiful face arrested his wandering thoughts and quickened his heart. Manifest admiration was in his glance as he approached, and into his brain there rushed an almost overwhelming desire to speak the thoughts that were in his heart. But so far she had never given him sufficient indication that such a declaration would be acceptable, and so, smothering his inclination, he simply raised his hat with a polite salutation.

She smiled as he approached.

"I have just been to the asylum," he said.

Her face became grave.

"Ah, yes," she returned; "to inquire after that poor man? Is there any fresh news?"

"Very little. He escaped very late last night or early this morning. The warders are now hunting the neighbourhood. It is to be hoped that the poor old man has not thrown himself in the river."

Nina shivered compassionately and nodded her head slowly.

"He is an old man, then?" she inquired.

"Yes; nearly sixty, Dr. Branksome tells me. A strange old man without friends, who imagines himself to be the rightful owner of property which, so far as anybody knows, has no existence outside his own imagination."

"Not an uncommon delusion, I believe," Nina suggested.

"No," Gerald answered. "Such a thing is, of course, quite prevalent among lunatics. But in this case the poor fellow supports his idea by declaring himself to be somebody else."

"That surely is also a common symptom of madness, is it not?" inquired Nina. "I have heard that people in asylums often declare themselves to be kings and queens."

"That is so," Gerald assented. "In this case, however, the claimed identity is the stranger because of its trifling difference from his own. His name is Felix—whereas he claims to be Anthony."

"Felix—Anthony—he thinks his name is Anthony—Anthony what?"

"Cordelvin—Anthony Cordelvin."

Nina Penhurst looked up quickly as Gerald Mortimer uttered the name. Then she made as though to step forward. Her lips formed for speech, but she could utter no word. Her beautiful eyes changed in a moment their look of clear intelligence for one of awesome vacancy. She swayed where she stood—swayed to the left and the right. A moment more and she would have fallen, but Gerald Mortimer stepped to her side just in time to catch her as, her senses leaving her, she fell forward in a dead swoon.

CHAPTER II.

Dr. Ephraim Manisty is Offered a £1,000 Fee.

It was twelve o'clock midnight, and very cold. The church of St. Mary, Whitechapel, boomed out the hour in slow, sonorous tones. At the same time, a swiftly-driven hansom from the City direction turned to the half-right, and rattled over the stones along the Commercial Road.

The lamp inside the cab was extinguished; but a close scrutiny, as the vehicle whirled past the yellow shafts of light from the gas-standards, would have revealed a mysterious-looking figure inside. A man's figure, tall, and broad of shoulder, and with a massive head covered with an iron-grey mop of hair, which, with the heavy beard, and the closely-buttoned coat-collar, suggested an attempt at disguise.

She placed her hands upon his shoulders and peered at his face closely.

Two long, thick fingers lifted the trap in the roof of the cab, and a staccato direction in deep, bass tones, passed clear-cut through to the driver.

"Cannon Street Road—first on the right—drive to Ratcliff Highway—then look out for Stevedore Street on the left."

"Right, sir!" and the driver flicked his horse.

A hansom in Ratcliff Highway (or High Street, Ratcliff, as it is called in these days) was not so common a sight as to pass unnoticed. Men and women staggering along the street, or lounging at tavern doors, paused to look at the vehicle inquiringly, and even menacingly, as it flashed past. But no untoward incident occurred, and the cab turned duly into Stevedore Street.

Half-way down the street, on the right-hand side, was a long, low window, the glass of which was ruby-coloured, while a lamp over the door shed rays of the same hue over the narrow road.

A brass plate announced that

DR. EPHRAIM MANISTY, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.,

lived there; while the stencilled inscription on the red window, "Advice and Medicine, Sixpence," betokened the social status of the doctor's patients. In a poor neighbourhood, medical fees must inevitably rule low;

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and, after all, a doctor's income is not of necessity commensurate with his ability. But among poor practices, Dr. Ephraim Manisty's was of the poorest.

That could be seen at a glance. The low, tumble-down house that seemed to huddle against its neighbours for support; the feebly-illumined windows, with their shabby blinds of cheap muslin; the rusty door-knocker; the dilapidated bell—all pointed to the poverty-stricken condition of the tenant.

The man in the cab alighted as soon as the vehicle stopped. He knocked at the door. There was a pause of about a minute, and then an uncertain step was heard in the passage. The door was opened by a man of about fifty—shabby, like the house, and dissolute-looking. It was the "sixpenny" doctor himself. Surprised at the sight of a well-dressed stranger, he was silent for a second.

Then the visitor said:

"I wish to consult Dr. Manisty."

The doctor indicated with a slow thumb pointed at himself, that he was the identical man, and led the way to the surgery. The interior of the house was even more grimy and poverty-stricken than the outside.

The doctor signed to his visitor to sit down, and at the same moment endeavoured to secrete a glass and a half-empty whisky-bottle, to which, it was evident from his condition, he had been paying attention just previously. The visitor observed the movement.

"Don't let me interrupt you, Dr. Manisty," he said. "Your profession must be a terribly trying one, and you doubtless find a little whisky an excellent sedative after a hard day's work. And now let me tell you I have come to seek your professional assistance."

"What's the matter with you?" queried the doctor, a little puzzled by the other's manner. "Why have you come to me?"

"One question at a time, doctor. It is not for myself that I want medical attention. But let me tell you in my own way. My name is—Causton. Yours, I believe, is Ephraim Manisty?"

The doctor bowed.

"Poor neighbourhood for your profession here—not an over-lucrative clientèle, eh?"

"Really," resented the doctor, trying to straighten himself, while a vestige of pride glimmered in his bleared eyes, "I don't see what this has to do with your visit."

"Pardon me," returned Mr. Causton, with a smile in which his mouth looked ugly, even under the protecting beard and moustache, "if I delay a few moments in making the connection clear. You *haven't* a very profitable lot of patients, have you now?" There was a strange mastery in his manner that compelled the other to curb his indignation.

"Well," replied the doctor, somewhat sullenly, "if it will satisfy you to know, I haven't."

"Thank you, doctor. Candour is as charming as it is rare. You *haven't*. And, therefore, if I offer you a thousand pounds as a fee——"

Dr. Manisty started.

"A thousand pounds!" he gasped.

"Kindly allow me to proceed. I repeat, if I offer you a thousand pounds as a fee, you will be ready to attend a friend of mine?"

"A thousand pounds!" the doctor said—and there was a strange light in his eye—"why, it would mean my salvation, and my wife's and children's. I haven't five pounds in the world. I would do anything for a thousand pounds—that is, almost anything."

"Even to certifying a man with heart disease as a 'first-class life' for a British Oak Insurance policy, eh?" Mr. Causton's eyes held a peculiar smile.

The other leapt to his feet.

"What do you mean?" he cried vehemently. "Have you come here to insult me? Who are you? Are you from Scotland Yard?" He looked half-scared, half-threatening.

"Calm yourself, doctor," the visitor remarked imperturbably. "You need not fear me. I am in no way connected with the police. Nor do I wish to insult you—unless the offer of a thousand pounds is likely to hurt your feelings. No, Dr. Manisty, I'm here in the best of good faith, only as we are to do business together, I wish you to know that I am acquainted with your antecedents."

The doctor groaned.

"Is it necessary to go into that?" he asked.

"Not at all—at any length," Mr. Causton answered, with a species of sardonic cheerfulness. "The mere mention of the fact that five years in Portland Prison doesn't seem to have improved your worldly prospects is sufficient."

"It is magnanimous of you to omit the details," retorted Dr. Manisty, bitterly. "But I suppose it is the penalty of crime to always have one's past recalled."

"Not at all, not at all. I am merely making sure that you are the man I want. We can now, I think, forget the past, and talk of the present and the future. A thousand pounds is a good fee?"

"A very good fee."

"Even for a Harley Street surgeon?"

"That is so."

"You will do what I want for that sum?"

"What *do* you want?"

"An operation performed on a friend of mine."

"An operation? Of what nature?"

"The amputation of an arm."

"What is wrong with the arm?"

"That you will see."

"But who is the patient—and where is he—and when is it to be done? You will give me some particulars?"

"The patient is, as I have said, a friend of mine. He is at present at Streatham. The operation must be performed at once—you must come with me now."

"But I want to know——" Dr. Manisty began.

"The other particulars are here," grimly rejoined Mr. Causton, pulling a bundle of crisp bank-notes from his breast-pocket; and he rustled them temptingly under the doctor's sight.

The latter's eyes glinted greedily. He paced the room.

"You won't give me further information?" he said, facing round.

"Is not the eloquence of these sufficient?" giving the notes another rustling shake. "I will give you one note for a hundred now, as a guarantee, and the remainder after the job is done. Will you come with me?"

"I don't know what to say," hesitated Dr. Manisty. "Yours is a peculiar request made in a peculiar way. I don't know what to think. In view of my past experiences, I don't want to run any risks."

"There are no risks. Come—you are poor—you have said so—you have a wife and children—and here's a chance of making a thousand pounds. You'll come with me?"

Dr. Manisty was pacing the room, his fuddled brain trying to think things out clearly. His visitor eyed him carefully as he poured out a glass of raw whisky and drank it off at a gulp.

"Yes!" the doctor exclaimed, with sudden determination. "I'll come with you! One hundred pounds down, you said?"

"Here it is—and now let us lose no more time."

Quickly Dr. Manisty collected a few drugs, bandages, and instruments, locked the bank-notes safely away in a drawer, and turned down the light.

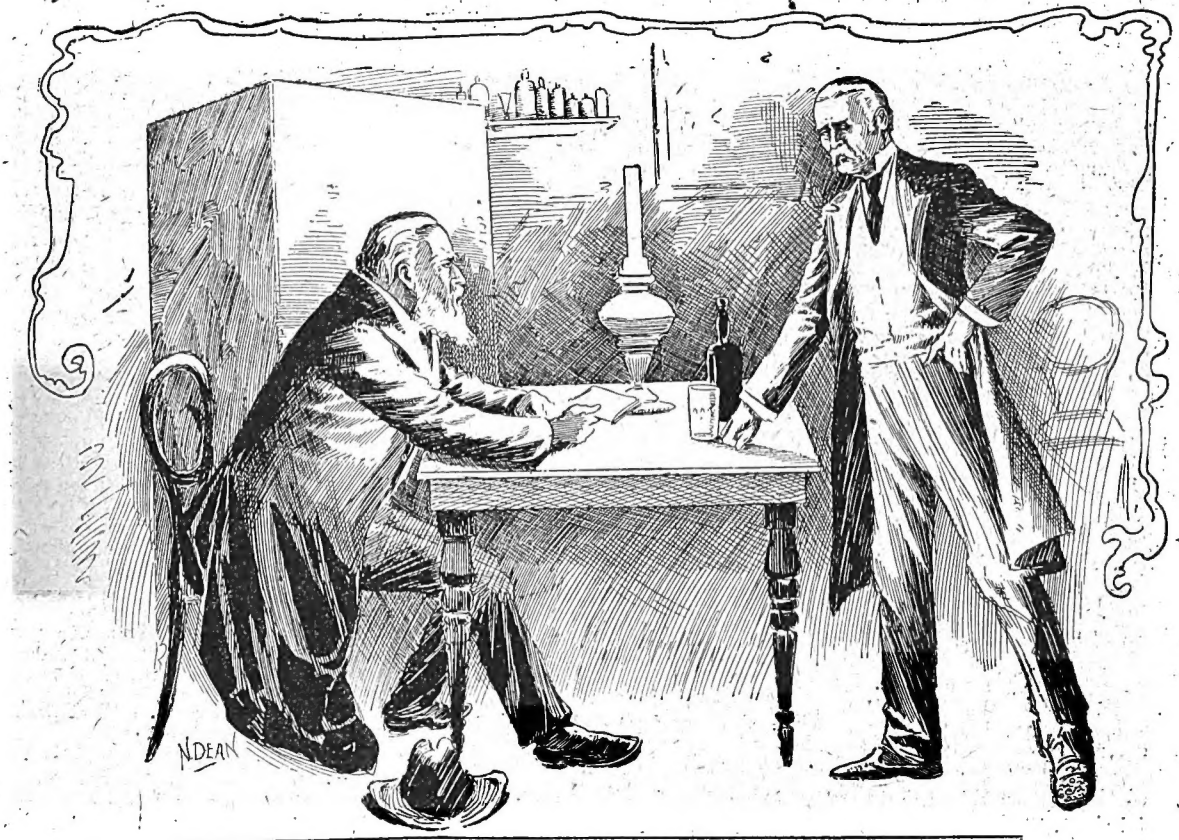
"I'm ready now!" he said.

The doctor led the way to the door. As he opened it, a soft sound as of someone moving away fell on their ears—a sound as of rustling skirts.

"What was that?" asked Mr. Causton.

"I don't know—probably some poor outcast resting on the step," replied Dr. Manisty.

They got into the cab, which had been waiting near a coffee-stall at the corner of the street. But neither noticed a tall, gaunt figure, clothed in a faded dark-blue cloak, hiding in the shadows of the houses. Nor did they know, as they rattled quickly back towards the City, that fifty yards behind them was another cab, with the same weird figure for its occupant. Yet there it was, the woman reclining in the vehicle, but with her head thrust eagerly forward, and a pair of strange-coloured eyes that seemed to gleam in the dark like a tigress', riveted on the rear-lights of the cab in front—steadfast and unblinking.



"Come, you are poor, you have said so, you have a wife and children, and here's a chance of making a thousand pounds."

On through the almost deserted streets of the City, where the echoing hoofs cleft the silence of the night; over London Bridge, beneath which the murky water lapped its doleful dirge and reflected a myriad lights like swords of living flame; through the dark, depressing Borough, into the comparative light and freshness of Kennington and Brixton. On, on; up Brixton Hill towards Streatham, and then, suddenly, the first cab turns sharply to the left, along a houseless road, flanked on one side with old elms and a long wall.

"Pull up!" The deep tones of Mr. Causton convey the order, and the vehicle stops.

The two men alight, and dismiss the cabman. Mr. Causton takes from his pocket a bunch of keys that jingle softly, fits one into the keyhole of a little gate in the wall, which he pushes open quickly. They pass through, and the gate is silently closed behind them. Before them rise the frowning walls of an old house, standing dark and silent as a forest pool, in its own extensive grounds. They walk on beneath the black shadows of the giant elms, which softly moan like lost spirits as the breeze stirs their boughs. Then, without a word, the two men pass into the house by a back door. Their journey is over.

And all through that journey, the rearmost cab has followed in their wake. The woman in the dark cloak has sat immovable throughout, her eyes for ever fixed on the cab ahead. When the latter stops, she stops too, and dismisses her driver. From a distance she watches the two men pass through the gate in the wall; and then, drawing her cloak tightly round her, she flits like a spectre towards the spot where they have disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

Dr. Manisty Performs his Task.

The house into which the two men had passed was a rambling, grey structure. Although of only one storey, its lofty rooms and sloping roofs prevented any suggestion of squatness, while its ample doors and windows, and its solid walls, gave it an appearance of dignity that could not fail to impress the casual observer.

To the nostrils of Dr. Manisty and his guide, there

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rose, as they entered the broad stone passage that led to the kitchen, that strange, musty smell of nothingness which ever pervades a house lacking occupants. The bare appearance of the place, as displayed by the feeble light of wax matches which Mr. Causton struck on entering, bore out the suggestion of vacancy.

They reached the kitchen, a large, stone-paved place, and Mr. Causton lighted a lamp standing on the long dresser. An ordinary kitchen table and two or three chairs completed the furniture, but a bright log fire in the big, old-time grate sent out a grateful warmth, and prevented any feeling of desolation. But although suffering no physical discomfort, Dr. Manisty could not forbear glancing suspiciously round the almost empty apartment.

"Ah, doctor!" remarked Mr. Causton, at length breaking the silence, "you are wondering where you are. This place, as you doubtless gather, is the kitchen."

"I see—I see it is!" Ephraim Manisty responded huskily. His manner was that of a man engaged in a task about which he was uncertain. "Is the house empty?" he added with a quick, interrogatory glance round.

"Ordinarily—yes. At the moment—no. Besides ourselves my son is here, and—and your patient." Mr. Causton emphasised the last words strangely, and shot a keen glance at the doctor.

Ephraim Manisty shivered, in spite of the fire. His eyes roved round, and his hands twitched nervously as he replied:

"Ah, yes; my patient! Where is he?"

"You shall see him presently. Meantime you will have some refreshment."

Mr. Causton drew out from a cupboard a spirit tantalus, remarking as he did so:

"It's picnic style, I'm afraid, doctor. But we have no womenkind here, and you must excuse it. What will you take?"

Dr. Manisty indicated the whisky, and Mr. Causton poured him out half-a-tumbler. He himself took a little plain soda-water.

"And now, doctor," observed Mr. Causton, after Ephraim Manisty had taken two glasses of neat spirit, "you will be anxious to begin work."

Dr. Manisty rose unsteadily.

"I am ready!" he replied huskily.

"Good! then please come with me."

Out of the kitchen they passed, and along a short corridor. Then up four steps into what apparently was the hall. The carpetless oak floor echoed dully to their tread. At the sound, a door on the left opened. A head peered cautiously out.

"All right, Stephen!" Mr. Causton said in an undertone. "I have returned." Then a trifle louder, "My son, this is Dr. Ephraim Manisty."

The latter gazed unsteadily at the young man to whom he had been thus introduced, and bowed. Stephen Causton, with a suspicious glance, returned the bow.

"How is the patient, Stephen?" inquired Mr. Causton.

"Asleep!" returned the other. "He has been sleeping for the past hour."

"That's all the better. Come, doctor!"

Mr. Causton led the way into the room. There was a carpet here and a couple of comfortable armchairs drawn up close to the fire. Upon a table in the middle of the room was a lamp, turned low, and with a large red shade. Against the further wall stood an ancient four-post bed, hidden by curtains closely drawn. In the silence the regular breathing of a sleeping man could be heard.

Beckoning the doctor, Mr. Causton tip-toed to the bedside and drew back the curtains cautiously. Upon the bed, in a sound sleep, lay an old man. His hair was grey, and his face deeply lined. His arms lay outside the coverlet.

"This is your patient," Mr. Causton whispered.

Ephraim Manisty nodded.

"What do you want me to do?" he inquired.

Mr. Causton's eyes gleamed angrily.

"I have already told you," he said testily. "I want you to amputate his left arm."

"But there is nothing the matter with it," retorted the doctor, "It is quite sound—see!" He rolled back the sleeper's sleeve as he spoke. The sleeper half-turned and moaned.

"Hush!" said the elder Causton, "you will wake him and spoil all. Come away; I will talk to you in the kitchen."

He signalled with his eyes to his son, and once more led the way to the kitchen. Upon his face was a look of grim determination.

"Dr. Manisty!" he demanded, facing round. "Am I to infer that you are going to raise obstacles?"

"There is nothing the matter with the man's arm," Manisty said doggedly. "Why do you wish me to amputate it?"

"I am not going to discuss the matter further than to say because I do."

"Somewhat of a *woman's* reason, isn't it?"

"No; a determined man's." Causton looked at the other in a way that made the doctor quail. But, low as Manisty had sunk, he had still a minute spark of manhood in him. He pulled himself together, passing a hand over his throbbing head.

"Supposing I refuse to do what you wish?" he retorted.

"Then," said Causton, his eyes flashing, "you will never do anything else!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you will never leave this house alive."

"What? You threaten me? I care nothing for your idle threats. You have tricked me into coming to this house." There was defiance now in the hitherto spiritless doctor. Causton regarded him coolly for a moment. Then, without the slightest perturbation, he drew from his pocket a revolver, and said calmly:

"That my threats are not idle this little weapon will prove. As regards *tricking* you, your contention is false. I made a specific bargain with you in your own house."

"But you didn't tell me that the man was quite well."

Mr. Causton waved his hand impatiently.

"I am not going to discuss the matter further," he said, and in his strange calmness there was sterner argument than any outburst of passion could have conveyed. "Let me state your position clearly. You undertook a task for which I offered to pay you one thousand pounds, and clinched the bargain by accepting a hundred on account. Complete the task, and you leave this house richer by nine hundred pounds. On the other hand, if you refuse, the circumstances of the case leave me no alternative but to kill you. No, no," he went on, observing the convulsive clenching of the doctor's fists, "it won't be of the slightest use your resisting. We are two to one," indicating his son, who stood in the background, "and we are armed. This house, as you have probably observed, is a secluded one, and any cries you may utter will have no chance of reaching the outer world. Now, what are you going to do?"

Dr. Manisty hesitated. He readily saw now that he was in grievous peril. If he refused to do this man's bidding, death stared him in the face. On the other hand, if he carried out the arrangement, he would gain a thousand pounds. Eyeing him carefully, Causton observed his wavering.

"Come, come," he encouraged. "You weren't so scrupulous about that British Oak insurance policy in the old days, you know. And in this case the risk is infinitesimal; besides, there's the thousand——"

"I'll do it!" Ephraim Manisty blurted the words out.

The man with the revolver said drily:

"I thought you would."

They returned to the bedroom. Dr. Manisty opened his case of instruments, keenly watched by the other two. A faint, sweet odour as of apples wafted through the room, and even while the man in the bed remained sleeping, the doctor administered chloroform. Its effects speedily became apparent. The breathing of the man in bed became slow, laboured, and stertorous; his pulse quickened. His face went pale and cold, and the whole muscular system relaxed.

Miss Penhurst found herself suddenly confronted by Gerald Mortimer.

A sound as of scratching on the curtained window caused the doctor to swerve round.

"What was that?" he asked. His manner and speech betokened a state of high nervous tension.

"It was merely the brushing of a branch against the window outside," replied the elder Causton. "Go on!"

There were no more interruptions. The doctor completed his task, and put away his instruments. As he snapped the case to, there came once more upon his ears that strange sound on the window.

"Someone is there!" the doctor cried hoarsely. "A spy, perhaps!" He dashed towards the window, snatched back the heavy red curtains, and pressed his face against the pane. But nothing met his sight except the drowsy movement of skeleton trees as they waved and moaned in the breeze.

"It was your fancy, doctor!" remarked Causton. "You are excited, and need sleep. Will you stay here till daylight? We can put you up."

"No, no," replied Ephraim Manisty, "I won't stay here. I will go now. I have been here long enough." He shuddered as he spoke. Causton had taken out his pocket-book, and the rustling of bank-notes was heard from his hand.

"Very well, as you will!" he rejoined. "Here, Dr. Manisty, is the conclusion of our bargain—nine notes of a hundred pounds each."

He passed the notes to the doctor as he spoke. The latter clutched them quickly, and thrust them into his pocket without even counting them. In a low voice he gave instructions as to the treatment of the sleeping man.

Two minutes later he had left the house. His grim task was done. In his pocket was his reward. But there was still a dull weight upon his brain that made him cast his eyes to the ground. And through his fevered mind there ran in endless repetition the query: "Where will this end? Where will this end?"

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CHAPTER IV.

The Discovery in the Castle Ruins.

Breakfast at Moulstone Manor was an early institution. Even in winter the household rose betimes, while yet the sun appeared as a red ball of mist upon the eastern horizon, and the air was at its purest.

Thus it happened that, at eight o'clock on a morning divided from the memorable escape from the neighbouring asylum by about a week, Nina Penhurst, the governess, invited the younger Mortimer children who were her charges, to go for a walk.

"The day is so fine," she remarked to Mrs. Mortimer, "that I think it would be far better for the children to be in the air than shut up in the schoolroom."

"I'm quite sure it would, my dear," responded Mrs. Mortimer. "And better for you too. You are quite pale still. Indeed, since that fainting fit of yours the other day, you have not looked yourself at all."

"Oh, but I'm feeling very well now," Nina rejoined. "And to faint as I did was a stupid thing to do when there was no reason for doing it."

"Oh, but there *was* a reason, my dear child. Gerald was to blame entirely for talking to you about that unfortunate man who escaped from the asylum. Men are so brutal in speaking about these things. However, it's past now, and it's no use talking. Which way are you going to walk?"

"To the ruins, I think," Nina returned. "Gladys is so fond of them."

"Yes mamma," chimed in Gladys, a pretty little maid of ten. "Miss Penhurst knows everything about the ruins, and tells us such lovely tales of the knights and barons who used to live there."

"Well, Gladys, mind you profit by them, and you, Harold, be sure and not get into the moat; the water's very deep there, you know, at this time of year."

The road to Moulstone Castle, of which the mouldering ruins alone stood now as a rambling, grey memorial to the old Norman fortress, lay for a distance in the direction of the asylum. By mere coincidence was it that Nina Penhurst and the two children turned off at the very path by which the strange woman in the blue cloak had sped away from Gerald Mortimer on that eventful night recently. Across the hard, frost-bound land they walked, skirting the wood and emerging on the bank of the little river Kel, which flowed lazily in summer, but blithely enough now that the rains of winter had swollen it, along the bottom of the sloping wood.

Before them as they turned to the right rose the old ruins a quarter of a mile away. They had stood originally upon an eminence in one connected and symmetrical pile, but landslip after landslip had wrenched the foundations out of place till its appearance had become what it was now—a central tower surrounded by rough, grey, moss-grown walls, tilted at all imaginable angles, and looking for all the world like up-rooted trees.

It was among these crumbling walls, which, with undergrowth and creepers hanging from their sloping summits, formed innumerable caverns, that the Penhurst children loved to play. It was their delight to run from the side of their governess and hide from her, and she, entering into the spirit of juvenility, indulged them in their harmless pastime.

No sooner had they come within fifty yards of the outer walls than Master Harold and Miss Gladys set off at a great pace, shouting behind them as they ran, a request to their governess to try and find them.

Miss Penhurst, walking slowly on to give them time to conceal themselves, turned presently round the angle of a wall, and found herself suddenly confronted by—Gerald Mortimer.

Nina flushed a little as she bowed, and he raised his hat. Then a moment later she went pale again.

"Are you sorry to see me?" he asked gently.

She looked up quickly with a faint smile.

"Sorry," she repeated, "why of course not—why should I be?"

He fixed his eyes upon her face for one moment, then averted them.

"Why should you be?" he echoed, swinging the end of his stick against the hard ground. He himself was a trifle pale now, as he continued: "Of course there's no reason why you should be sorry to see me, is there?"

She looked up wonderingly. The words he had spoken puzzled her, not in themselves, but in the way he uttered them. But she only answered again:

"Of course not."

"And there's no reason why you should be glad either, is there?" He hazarded a quick glance at her again. She dropped her eyes and flushed once more. For a moment she knew not how to answer, but then she said:

"Really, Mr. Mortimer, I—but there, I'm forgetting all about the children. I promised to play hide and seek with them," And she made as though to move away.

But a restraining hand laid tenderly on her arm by Gerald held her back.

"No, don't go yet. Ni—Miss Penhurst. You can play with the children any time, and I want to speak to you now."

The softness of his touch upon her arm, the tenderness of his tone, and the earnestness of his face kept her motionless and silent. Her heart fluttered as she stood there, not daring to look up at him, or, indeed, anywhere, save on the ground.

"I have something to say to you," he went on, and there was a suspicion of a quaver in his deep voice which betrayed a great effort to control his emotion, "which is of more importance to me than anything else in the whole world. Miss Penhurst—Nina, I want to tell you that I love you, that——"

"Mr. Mortimer! you must not!"

"I loved you when I first saw you," he went on vehemently, unheeding her gasped interruption, "and since then my love has grown and grown till my whole heart and being is dominated by this one desire, that you will be my wife. Nina, say you will; don't keep me in——"

"Mr. Mortimer!"—she was trembling violently now—"you must not ask me. I ought not to have listened so long to you, but now that it is said, I can only beg of you never to revert to the subject again."

"But, Nina," he burst out again, unmindful of her disapproving look when he again used her Christian name, "you cannot mean what you say. I love you as man never loved a woman before, and I have thought that you— But no, you cannot mean what you say."

Nina turned her head away, incapable of witnessing his distress. But within her was a stern sense of duty which no compassion, no inclination to spare his feelings, must oppose. She brushed away hastily the tears that would bedew her eyes, forced back the lump that rose persistently in her throat, and spoke again.

"You must not—must not talk to me of—of these things."

"But why? Are you already——?"

"No, no," she broke in, divining what he would say, "there is no other man——"

"Then perhaps some day—you will let me hope?"

He looked eagerly at her, right into her eyes. Mournfully she shook her head.

"I must not deceive you," she said, in slow, sorrowful accents. "We are friends now; we can never be more. Ah! do not ask me to explain. There are reasons, good and sufficient, why, whatever my feelings may be towards you, I should never marry you."

"Whatever your feelings may be towards me!" he

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repeated. Then, unable to withstand further the great impulse of his heart, he stepped forward and took her in his arms. "Nina, Nina, my darling! Then you do love me. Say that you do!" and he kissed her passionately as he held her.

Whatever reply Nina Penhurst might have given at that moment was destined never to be uttered. For even as Gerald Mortimer held her in his arms, and bent down, waiting for her answering words, there suddenly broke upon their ears a cry.

A startled cry; the cry of a boy who shrank before some fearsome thing, and yet was spell-bound by it.

"What was that?" Nina released herself and listened for its repetition. Gerald was listening too. "It was Harold's voice. Ah! there it is again. It comes from the other side of the ruins. He is hurt, or in danger. We must go to him!"

But Gerald has dashed off already, and is nearing the source of the repeated cry. From the top of a knoll, he catches sight of his young brother, deep down in a grass-grown pit which an old landslip has formed. Little Harold is running to and fro, wringing his hands in terror, shrieking for Miss Penhurst, and ever and anon casting fearful glances into an ivy-grown hole, over which a section of wall hangs and forms a sort of cave.

In less time than it takes to write, Gerald is with him.

"What is it, Harold? What is the matter?"

"In there, see, in there. Oh! horrible!"

The boy's eyes and trembling hands point the way, and fearlessly Gerald steps forward, kicking the ivy aside as he advances. But he suddenly checks himself, and almost totters back, an affrighted cry upon his lips smothered with difficulty, as soon as instinct sends it there.

Irresolute he stands for a moment, with horror in his eyes. Then a questioning call comes to him from Nina, who is approaching, and stirs him to immediate action. He snatches at the ivy which grew all around, and piles it over the affrighting *something*. Then he steps out of the cave, seizes Harold in his arms, and hastens to meet Nina Penhurst.

"You mustn't tell Miss Penhurst what you have seen," he whispers hoarsely to the boy. "You mustn't tell her, do you hear, Harold?" And Harold hears, and is obedient.

Nina herself is too agitated by the memory of Gerald's recent words to put questions, and a specious reason is given by Gerald to account for Harold's cries. There is no suggestion to remain any longer, and Gladys approaching from the other side of the ruins at that moment, a start is made for home.

It is a silent little party as they return, and whatever talk there is, is by little Gladys, who alone has encountered no experience to numb her tongue. At the junction of the field path with the road, Gerald halts, and at length breaks the silence. He addresses Nina:

"I am going up to the asylum," he says, with an effort to be calm; "I want to see Dr. Branksome. Don't wait lunch. Possibly I may not be back." He lowers his tone and adds: "I will speak to you again to-night." Then he turns to his young brother with a whispered injunction:

"Mind, Harold, not a word about what you saw—not a word till I return home, you understand."

A second later and he is gone. For fifty yards he walks at his normal pace, for for that distance they whom he has just left can see him. But a bend of the lane hides him from sight, and he starts to run as though for dear life. Breathless, he reaches the asylum gates, and the porter, who knows him, admits him without question, but with wonder in his eyes at Gerald's haste. His intimacy with Dr. Branksome is close enough to render announcement unnecessary, and in a short space of time he bursts into the doctor's room.

"Branksome!" he gasps.

"Why, what's up, Mortimer? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Perhaps I have. I have just found a dead man!"

"Good Heavens, man! Where?"

"Under a wall in the ruins of Moulstone Castle. It is an old man dressed in asylum clothes."

"Asylum clothes—then it's Cordelvin, who escaped last week."

"Yes; that is what I thought. His face is somewhat disfigured, and he has only one arm!"

"One arm—but Cordelvin had two—I don't understand."

"There is evidently some mystery here. I didn't examine him closely. I had no time, as I will explain to you later, but his left arm seemed to have been amputated."

The doctor looked on with breathless interest. He turned to the wall and rang a bell.

"There *is* a mystery—a strange mystery," he said to Gerald. Then to the servant who appeared he added:

"Tell Beasley to get a stretcher party ready immediately to accompany me to the Castle ruins."

A little later Beasley and three other warders, bearing a stretcher between them, were on their way with Gerald Mortimer and Dr. Branksome to the fateful spot.

(To be continued.)

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WOOING BY COMPACT.

How Francis Carleton Saved his Honour.

FRANCIS CARLETON woke with a headache; he turned from the glare of the midday sun, which had filtered through the lace draperies at his window, and rang the bell for his valet.

"Williams, what time it it?"

"'Alf after twelve, Mr. Francis, sir; breakfast will be ready in five minutes, sir."

"Hang breakfast! I was drunk last night wasn't I?" Williams coughed diffidently, behind a deprecating hand. Carleton sat up in bed and seized his pillow.

"Give me a straight answer or I'll chuck it," he threatened.

"Well, sir, per'aps as 'ow it wasn't last night, as one might say." He caught the flying pillow dexterously, without a change of countenance, and placed it upon a far-distant chair. Carelton had no more pillows; Williams had decidedly the advantage.

"Was I, or was I not, drunk at three of the clock this morning?" persisted Carleton.

"You was, sir," said Williams, driven to the wall.

"Williams," said his master, knitting his brows, "you are dismissed."

Williams bowed. "Will you get up, sir, or 'ave your coffee 'ere?" Williams had often been dismissed under like conditions.

"I mean what I say," said Francis Carleton, thrusting his feet into his slippers and his form into the costly dressing gown that Williams handed him. "I'm broke, Williams, utterly broke, and you're out of a job." Williams smiled. He had often heard that cant, and went on methodically laying out Carleton's immaculate morning toilet. An electric tinkle rent the air. Carleton started, it was so loud and peremptory. Williams answered it and brought back a card.

"Philippe Durano, ahem! we must dress at once; give him the morning papers, and make him comfortable in the library. He may join me at breakfast—or stay—we will call it luncheon, Williams. I have breakfasted long ago—years ago, I think," and Carleton plunged his handsome fair head into a basin of cold water. A quarter of an hour later he was shaking hands with a round-faced, chubby little man, while Williams brought in a small table as a preliminary to luncheon.

"You'll join me of course, Durano," said Carleton, "and we'll talk business over a bottle of your own old Burgundy, for I presume you've come to talk business."

"Yes—partly—I may say quite on business," said Durano, evidently ill at ease.

"Oh, well—well—we can settle all difficulties, I dare say; have a cigar while you wait," and Carleton dashed into bright and chatty talk of himself and his special circle—items in which he knew his visitor took an absorbing interest. The two men ate heartily, and when Williams had retreated Carleton passed the Burgundy and demanded:

"Now, Durano."

"I've come to the end of my tether; I cannot supply you any longer, Mr. Carleton."

"Indeed! What is the matter? Has your establishment gone to smash? Too bad! Is there anything I can do, old man?" Durano smiled; the situation was superbly ironical. Carleton smiled, too, somewhat lamely.

"Of course, I understand," he said, "you want some sort of a settlement, and I don't blame you in the least; but, I say, Durano, you are too much of a gentleman to press me now. I'm pledged for at least half a dozen more entertainments this season, and you surely won't forsake me."

"Not if you will allow me to receipt this," and Durano pushed a bill of large dimensions across the table; Carleton stared at it like one fascinated.

"I can't do it. I am living up to every penny of my income, and the governor has positively refused to advance another farthing. Have pity, my dear fellow you see before you the heir to millions—and a bankrupt." Durano shrugged his shoulders—the last trace left of his French extraction; in all else he was thoroughly English.

"I cannot be put off any longer—I have been very lenient."

"A regular brick," declared Carleton, hiding his quaking heart beneath a genial smile.

"I know what young fellows are; I sowed my own wild oats before I became a gentleman caterer." Carleton groaned in spirit—if only Durano would cut that!

"I didn't rise from head cook, I can tell you; I'd lowered my social standing when I began to make money."

"It doesn't raise one socially to lose it," sighed Carleton; "it's one of those instances where extremes meet; I like to shake hands and cry quits."

"So would I—perhaps we may—but I want you to understand that I don't bank on your prospects."

"Heaven forbid!"

"As I said," pursued Durano, sipping his Burgundy reflectively, "my business has hurt me socially, but I've made a great fortune—I could retire to-morrow if I chose, but I must be sure of regaining my old position—at least for Adrienne's sake."

"Adrienne—your daughter?"

"Yes—all that is left me besides my money."

"I did not know——" began Carleton.

"No, assuredly not, my Adrienne is far too fine a jewel to be flashed before all eyes. She has been educated abroad. This is her first winter at home."

"By Jove!" laughed Carleton. "Durano with a pretty daughter! I'll tell the fellows the next time we meet what a sly old boy you are!"

Durano pushed back his chair and faced his host threateningly. "I had a motive, Francis Carleton, in mentioning my daughter's name to you; that name is

above reproach and must be held as sacred in your midst as the names of your sisters and sweethearts."

The little man looked several inches taller as he stood over Carleton, with flashing eyes, but he cooled down the next moment and took his seat again.

"I beg your pardon," said Carleton meekly.

Durano accepted the apology graciously. "There is a way out of your dilemma," he began after a pause. "I have but one proposition—you may accept or decline; it seems to me however that you should consider it seriously."

"Well——" said Carleton, leaning forward eagerly.

"My daughter is very handsome," pursued Durano, "She is cultured and refined, she has been accustomed always to the very best." He paused again.

"She has a good father," put in Carleton, to fill up the gap.

"I have great ambitions for her, she must marry among the best."

"Ah!" Carleton straightened up suddenly, but he could not afford to be angry just at that moment.

"I see," he remarked quietly. Durano breathed a sigh of relief.

"I'm glad I make my meaning clear, but I must speak even more plainly. I do not think, as you now stand, that you are an eligible *parti*."

"Hardly." Carleton smiled in spite of himself.

"You've been leading a gay life and are fathoms in debt, principally to me."

"Exactly."

"Suppers, dinners, luncheons, even breakfasts of the most elaborate description."

"Which you have itemised, no doubt."

"Assuredly, at the same time, you are on the social plane where I would like to place my Adrienne, stretch out your hand to her—and you owe me nothing."

Carleton broke into a nervous laugh. "My dear fellow, do you really mean what you say?"

"I do—see, I give you both sides of the picture—a continuation of this easy bachelor life, in these luxurious rooms, with every comfort about you, capped by a marriage, in every way a worldly triumph, or——"

Carleton put up both hands. "Don't give me the other side," he implored. "Look here, Durano, I'll be frank with you, I'm perfectly heart whole, I have yet to love a woman better than a horse—I'm not speaking of family ties, naturally they are born in one—but the love that leads to the altar and all that sort of thing, you know, has never gripped me. Now, as you are aware, my tastes are democratic, still I've never thought of looking for a mate out of my own sphere—I don't know if your sphere or mine is on top—that's neither here nor there. I'm not bragging about mine, but it's a ticklish business going out of doors when you're sought after at home."

"How if they knew about the debts?" suggested Durano.

"'All would be up with poor little Robin'—no papa-in law would have me, I seriously doubt if I'd have more than a bowing acquaintance with my own respected parent."

"Then consider——"

"Oh, I do—I'm considering past consideration—why, if you do not think me an eligible *parti*, do you thrust me on your daughter?"

"For reasons it is needless to state again. I do not wish to thrust you on my daughter, or her on you, I wish you to visit her as you visit young women of your own set—judge her by your own standards, as she will judge you by hers—the only difference will be, that you will come as a suitor— she being untrammelled."

"She is a woman; therefore to be wooed—
She is a woman, therefore to be won."

quoted Carleton softly. "Well, old man, it's a novel sort of scheme, if I go in seriously for this, you'll set me free, if I propose matrimony in due form, of course, how if she refuses me?"

"You will have done what you could—it would be your misfortune, and I can be generous, money is not my object. You are practically free from the day you ask Adrienne to marry you."

"It's a compact, then," said Carleton. "How long do you give me?"

"Six months."

"She'll never have me," was the young fellow's confident thought, "she's one of those beautiful creatures with high ideals." Aloud he asked:

"When shall we meet?"

"Dine with me on Monday," said Durano.

The Duranos lived at Richmond, and the house—built on a high elevation—faced a broad bend in the beautiful river.

The door was opened by a man in livery, who took his coat in quite the ordinary way, and Carleton was ushered into a beautiful drawing-room. His quick eye had scarcely time to take in the priceless simplicity and beauty of the whole when his host joined him, and presently there was a soft sound—which could scarcely be called a rustle—of trailing skirts, and a vision paused for a moment on the threshold.

A tall girl dressed in some soft, silky fabric of a deep yellow hue, came gracefully forward, in acknowledgment of her father's introduction. Carleton stared at her almost stupidly at first. Durano's daughter was certainly not what his fancy had painted; this queenly young woman with her olive complexion, her finely-chiselled features, her glorious eyes, her heavy coils of glossy black hair—was something to strike awe into his soul, she looked as if she had stepped from the frame of some old Venetian portrait, for her gown was somewhat mediæval in style, and the yellow rose worn in the low coiffure might have been a love token.

She seemed to fill the room with a rich, warm presence. Carleton forgot where he was—and how he came to be there—and he watched her admiringly as she presided at the perfectly appointed dinner, while Durano watched him, well satisfied at the way the affair was progressing.

Adrienne must have thought their guest unusually silent and hard to entertain—in reality, Carleton was enjoying a recreation not common among the men of his set, he was castle building, and having mentally ejected Monsieur Durano from his seat at this festive board, he and his hostess were dining alone, as a newly married pair should dine; she wore the yellow gown because he had first seen her in yellow, and the rose—why, he had given it to her, and she had gently kissed it before putting it in her hair; and those hands, moving so daintily, had he not kissed them over and over—were they not his to kiss whenever he wished?

"Are you fond of horses, Mr. Carleton?" she asked for the second time, her eyes full of suppressed laughter. Carleton roused himself, and his castle tumbled down like a house of cards.

"Horses? Ah, you've touched my weakest spot. And I've lost enough money in that quarter to buy a couple of racers."

"I don't wonder!" she exclaimed, sympathetically. "I went once to the Grand Prix at Paris, and I lost m

head as well as a fat little capital I'd taken with me to use discreetly. Since then I've not been tempted to go to a race, but I love to ride and my own horse is a beauty, a black, slim creature, and swift as a bird."

"Perhaps you'll let me join you occasionally, I can always get a mount, and I know the roads so well I would certainly prove an excellent guide."

She accepted his offer with evident pleasure.

"You cannot tell what a boon you are bestowing," she said gratefully, "one cannot enjoy and discuss nature with one's groom, and the out-of-door life tempts me so often, to the exclusion of other duties. I'm afraid," with a smile, "I will never make a conventional society woman, I'm too fond of my freedom."

Carleton nodded approvingly. "That's right, stay where you are, Miss Durano, the society woman would not be your sort—too much striving and straining."

"For what?" asked Adrienne, turning to him.

"For one thing—position; they all want to be first."

"And then?"

"Well, there's a grave problem which always confronts them—how to satisfy 'a champagne appetite on a beer income'—to use a trite phrase—very serious, I assure you. I've tried such mental arithmetic myself—it's—it's dispiriting—it sinks one's ideals—it brings one face to face with such depressing reality."

Adrienne looked at him critically. "You don't bear any scars," she said.

"Because I've been keeping up the champagne diet, regardless of consequences; sometimes consequences come home to roost."

He threw just a little pathos into his tone, and his handsome face looked so grave, that Adrienne smiled with added friendliness and Durano almost chuckled over his wine. Carleton was moving things quickly.

On the young man's part he tried not to think of the odious compact to which he owed the birth of this new friendship; this girl with the wonderful eyes, her sweet voice, her indescribable grace, had all unconsciously cast a spell about him. He had meant to go a-courting in a calm, deliberate manner, to propose in due form, accept his inevitable rejection stoically, and Monsieur Durano's receipted bill with well-concealed triumph.

But now what a difference! He only remembered that he was young, and that she was young and beautiful and that life and love were for such as they; and she saw the love in his eyes and liked the numberless unspoken tokens which marked his intercourse with her.

Williams' position became somewhat of a sinecure; regular hours marked his master's rising and retiring, the days were spent in active, healthful exercise, and Williams grew sleek and fat from regular living. No more champagne suppers, no more carousals at the club, all of which signs Williams accepted with the stolid indifference of his order. But when it came to rising betimes of a Sunday, and making devout preparation for church, and tenderly nursing a great bunch of violets, which was certainly not intended for a boutonnière—then, as Williams stood at the window and watched the athletic young figure go swinging down the street, he put up a discreet hand—and smiled behind it.

As for Adrienne, she was woman enough to see that something beyond a mere desire to be agreeable brought the young man so often to her father's house, and, womanlike, she could not help rejoicing over the power she had to draw him away from the great world, about which her father talked so constantly.

The allotted time was fast approaching and Carleton had not yet spoken.

Once he came dangerously near it when they were riding together in a narrow bridle path, the groom far behind and she close to him—so temptingly close, but he was man enough to stifle the longing, perhaps he was not so sure of himself and of her as he had been when Durano and he had hatched their little scheme. At any rate, he looked far from happy, on a certain morning, when he was admitted into Durano's private office. Durano eyed him keenly, but said nothing beyond the usual greeting—he well knew the cause of this visit; the period of probation was over, but he was willing to allow for the hesitation of the real lover, which Francis Carleton had proved himself to be.

"You noticed, perhaps," remarked Carleton, plunging characteristically into the midst of things, "that I have failed to fulfil my part of that very remarkable treaty we made six months ago."

"Oh, yes—yes—but I'm in no hurry — take your time—a few days, more or less, will make no difference—I can see you are in earnest."

"In such deadly earnest that I altogether refuse to make the deal. No—hear me first—I will not so insult the woman I love as to buy her at any price, and I will owe her father no debt when I ask Adrienne to marry me. I must look once into those clear eyes without feeling like a cur, and there is but one way."

"And what will you do, my friend?" Durano asked

"Work."

"So? You can break stones then?" sarcastically.

"No, but I can read law. I am to enter an office next week."

"Good, you have energy."

"I needed the incentive. See here, Durano, I've not kept the compact. I must pay the forfeit, but I won't go to my father. Can you wait for me?"

Durano stretched out his hand.

"I'd cancel the whole affair if I did not know my man so well. It is not the money I want, Carleton. I've told you that before."

"It is your daughter I want, and I'm going to have her, Heaven helping me," and Carleton gripped the proffered hand, and strode to the door.

"Amen," said Durano, when he found himself alone.

Carleton went home and wrote to his father a short non-committal letter, as he thought, telling of his plans and his desire to settle down and give his life a practical aim. By return post he received the following note:

> My Dear Boy—Send me her photo—for, of course, there's a woman in the case—there always is. You forgot to ask for a cheque. I herewith inclose it. Have you been ill? The law pays well. Stick to it. Ever your loving father,
>
> Francis Carleton.

P.S.—Provided she be good and beautiful I forgive and bless you.

Francis Jr. gasped at the amount of the cheque, it was more than enough to satisfy Durano and other creditors—and left him free to—to——

Society raised its twenty eyebrows, when close upon the news of Francis Carleton's serious turn towards business came the cards announcing his quiet marriage. Society also raised twenty hands and ten voices in vigorous protest. But what was done was done, and as no one could serve like Durano it was well not to push him too far. Of course there were ways of letting the newly-married couple see—but this resolution had nothing to do with the crush at young Mrs. Carleton's first "at home."

Belle Moses.

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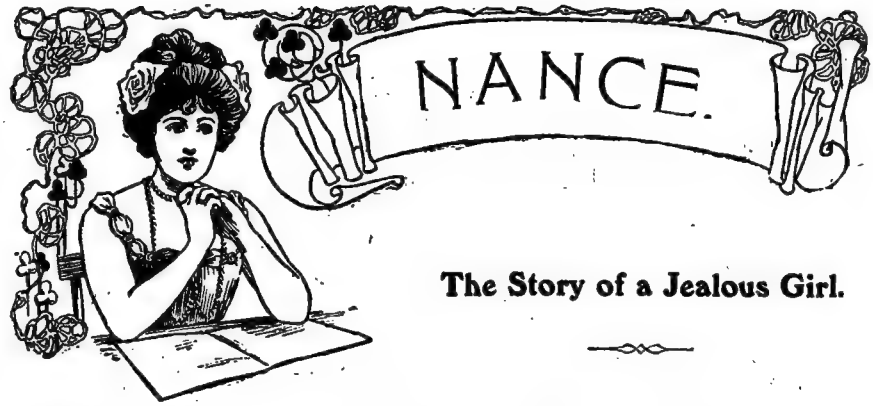

The Story of a Jealous Girl.

A YOUNG couple, very recently engaged, were discussing a question of grave importance.

The young lady held in her hand an invitation to spend the month of September at Meadow View, a friend's beautiful home in the Welsh mountains.

The young man said earnestly:

"You know, Gertrude, that I'm going there next week to fish and hunt. The other guests—quite a house party—will come the first week in September. You must give me your promise to accept Mrs. Black's invitation."

The young lady thoroughly understood the charm of girlish caprice, and the mingled fascination and annoyance her lover experienced in never knowing what she would do, think, or say. She answered with composure:

"I think I shall spend the month at Mont Eagle. I have heard that Mrs. Black is a charming hostess. I am sure that you will find her guests congenial and enjoy your outing."

She expected a violent protest, and felt assured that her decision would regulate the duration of his visit.

"We have reached the parting of our ways very soon, haven't we, Gertrude? Well, I give in, and hope you may have at Mont Eagle as much fun as I intend to have at Meadow View."

Two weeks later he wrote:

"Do you remember Miss Drumgoole's book, 'The Valley Path?' I have found the people of whom she writes. They are the aborigines of the hills. They fascinate me. I feel that I am continually discovering new types of humanity; and, Gertrude, I have found Lissie of 'The Valley Path.' Strange to say she is wonderfully like you. I often look at the flower-like face of this child-woman and wonder if a cruel fate will blight its beauty, or love some day wake her sleeping soul to a consciousness of happiness now unknown. I am at her cottage quite often, for her father is a great hunter and fisherman, to whom I have attached myself. He is a quaint old codger, whom Miss Drumgoole would immortalise.

"Nance often goes with us on our expeditions. She is quite familiar with the lore of the forest, knows the nature of all wild things, from the gulls which build their nests in the cliffs to the sparrows which answer her call. You would be amused at the 'curious' questions she often 'axes' me. I am her pupil and her teacher. She unfolds for me the mysteries of stream and woods, and I tell her of the life beyond the hills.

"She is a psychological study to me. Her mind unfolds like the petals of a white flower. Of course, her charm for me is because she is *you*, sweetheart, before you were touched with the wand of accomplishment and culture. You cannot realise how beautiful, how free life seems to me here among the everlasting hills. The very atmosphere seems saturated with dreamy romance. The haze on the hills, the rhythm of the river, the blended fragrance of tangled creepers and wild mountain flowers awaken me to a new experience of existence.

"Yesterday we went fishing, had a picnic in the woods. Doctor and Mrs. Black, old Fred Brown, Nance, and I composed the party. I caught one trout which weighed—but, excuse me, dear, I forgot that you feel no interest in such sport.

"The guests for September come next week. I think it a desecration that Mrs. Black's 'lodge in the wilderness' should be brought in touch with the outer world. You wounded me just a little when you preferred Mont Eagle to Meadow View, but I see that you were right. You always are. The hill country here would be unbearable to you when contrasted with that ultra-fashionable resort."

It was a coincidence that with this letter came one from Mrs. Black asking her to exercise a woman's prerogative, change her mind, and come to the wilds.

* * * * *

They were standing upon the heights looking down upon the river. He was pointing out the beauties of the scene. Her manner had lost its piquancy. She was listless and depressed. For an hour and a half she had waited for him to speak of Nance. For exactly that length of time he had waited for her to do the same thing. At last she casually remarked:

"Where is your wood nymph? Shall I not have the pleasure of meeting her?"

"No; she is dead."

"Dead!"

"I mean she has never been born; has never walked the earth in mortal form. Lissie was the creation of Miss Drumgoole's fancy, Nance of mine."

Then this utterly depraved young man threw himself upon the ground and laughed until the birds hushed their songs.

The girl became the impersonation of wrath and indignation. She turned to leave the spot, but he caught her hand and said:

"Gertrude, sweetheart, don't be too hard on me. I wanted you. I could not stay here and you at Mont Eagle, so I just baited a little trap with jeal—*curiosity*, I mean, and in you walked like the unsuspecting darling which you are. You would not come to oblige me but Nance Brown——"

"You are the most perfectly horrible——"

"Speak out, Gertrude, call me anything you wish—a beast, a reprobate, anything—I'll bear it all!"

Ripples of mirth and gurgles of laughter broke up the mock penitence, as he added:

"That Nance business was an inspiration."

ANNIE BRASHEAR.

EDWARD FARRELL CHEMIST

By Philip Moon.

IV.—THE HIDDEN MESSAGE.

EDWARD FARRELL had finished his breakfast, and was leisurely looking over his correspondence for the morning.

His letters were usually of a very varied and miscellaneous character, and this morning they were apparently no exception to the rule. There were book circulars, letters from students seeking his help, bills for chemicals and apparatus, notes from fellow scientists, and, in fact, all the varied collection of circulars and letters that usually welcomes the average scientific man at his matutinal letter opening.

Most of Farrell's letters were easily and quickly dealt with, but one seemed to greatly puzzle him. It was from his very old friend, Professor Sheyne, and had the appearance of having been hurriedly written. Farrell read it over once again.

"Dalton House, Woodford.

"Dear Farrell,—I inclose you the list of formulæ you asked me for, I think if you write them out according to their *common* names, study them well, and act as they suggest, you will find them all you need—but you will have to hurry with your investigation.

"Fe, NH_3, Hg, F, C_2H_4, As_2S_2, KOH, C_3H_6, $C_6H_{10}O_5$, NH_3, H_2O, Sb, Y, CH_2O_2, O, Pb, CaO, C_2H_4, H_2O, $CaCO_3$, H, Pb_3O_4, As_2S_3, Hg, C_2H_6, HCL, C_2H_2, Pb, KCL.

"Yours truly,

"RICHARD SHEYNE."

"What on earth does he mean?" Farrell ejaculated, after a puzzled pause; "the list of formulæ that I asked him for? He must be dreaming, or else I asked him in my sleep.

"Then what does he mean; to act as they suggest? What on earth *should* they suggest to any sane man? They appear to be only a list of the formulæ of some very common substances."

Farrell mused a little longer.

"I can't make head or tail of it," he said to himself, at length, "they are no earthly use to any investigation I am making."

"Perhaps," continued he, "it's only a joke of Sheyne's. Let's see what it looks like when they are written out as he suggests, with their common names."

He took a sheet of paper lying on his desk, and scribbled out the names of the substances represented by the symbols in the letter.

This is the record the paper held.

Iron, ammonia, mercury, flourine, olefiant gas, realgar, caustic potash, ethane, dextrin, ammonia, water, antimony, yttrium, formic acid, oxygen, lead, lime, olefiant gas, water, chalk, hydrogen, redlead, orpiment, mercury, ethane, hydrochloric acid, ethane, lead, potassium chloride.

Farrell stared long and fixedly at the paper, but with apparently no result.

"It's a mystery," he said, "or, if it's a joke, I fail to see the point."

Then, as he continued to pore over the paper, he suddenly drew a sharp breath, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"I see it," he cried, "the first letters of the common names are a hidden message to me," and he snatched up another piece of paper, and hurriedly wrote out the first letter of each substance in the order it stood on his list. This time the paper read like this I.A.M.F.O. R.C.E.D. A.W.A.Y. F.O.L.L.O.W. C.H.R.O.M.E.H.E. L.P.

Farrel gave a low whistle of astonishment. "This appears to be anything but a joke," he said. "'*I am forced away follow chrome help*'—whatever does it mean? It is evident that Sheyne is in trouble of some sort, and wants me to go to him; but what he means by 'following chrome,' I can't make out. The first thing to do is evidently to get to Woodford as quickly as I can, then I can, perhaps, find out more about it."

He hastily ran through the remaining letter or two of his morning correspondence, and then rushed off as fast as train and cab could take him to Woodford.

Sheyne's residence, Dalton House, stood on the outskirts of the delightful suburb of Woodford, near to the fringe of Hainault, or Epping Forest.

It was a pretty and a comfortable house, standing in

small grounds of its own, and not inconveniently crowded by its neighbours. Professor Sheyne was a fortunate man in more senses than one.

Possessed of good means and a great love of scientific pursuits, he was able to indulge the one at the expense of the other.

He had built himself a spacious laboratory at the far end of his grounds, and there, when not lecturing to his Cambridge students, he spent most of his time. His sister, Amy, kept his comfortable bachelor's home for him, and tended him with the indulgent love of an only sister. Yes, Richard Sheyne was a fortunate man; of that there could be no doubt.

He had lately been engaged upon the absorbing problem of gold extraction, and it was widely rumoured among his scientific friends that he had succeeded in perfecting a process that would probably revolutionise the whole of the gold extraction industry. Rumour even went so far as to say that a powerful South African Syndicate had approached him with the object of acquiring his secret in return for which they offered him an altogether fabulous sum of money. How far rumour was correct, Farrell had never tried to discover, except that he knew with certainty that Sheyne's researches had, of late, led him into the region of gold extraction.

As soon as Farrell's cab came to a standstill before the door of Dalton House, he sprang out, and hurried into the house. Amy Sheyne came into the drawing-room almost immediately, with a smile of welcome on her face.

"Good morning, Mr. Farrell. To what fortunate chance do I owe this pleasure? I hope you have not called to see my brother, because he was called away unexpectedly last night, and has not yet returned."

Farrell was rather astonished at his welcome. Evidently Richard Sheyne's sister had no suspicion that all was not well with her brother.

What could it mean? For a moment the suspicion crossed Farrell's mind that he had been hoaxed, but he dismissed the thought as soon as it had formed, he knew Richard Sheyne too well to entertain such a notion long.

He debated with himself as to whether he had better disturb Amy Sheyne's peace of mind with his vague misgivings. He knew her to be a brave little lady, however, and quickly decided that it would be best to be quite open with her.

"Did you see your brother before he left?" he asked. "Was anyone with him, or did he go alone? I am anxious because I received this letter this morning, and to my mind it points to your brother's absence as enforced rather than voluntary." And Farrell produced Sheyne's letter, and his own paper containing the solution of the cipher message.

Amy Sheyne's face went a shade whiter as she listened to Farrell's explanation, but she showed no other sign of weakness.

"It is very certain," she said when Farrell had finished, "that my brother has been forced away against his will. He did not come to the house himself, but sent a message by a man, who called himself a friend of his, to say he was called away suddenly, and might not be home for a night or two, and adding that I was not to worry.

"I know how eccentric Richard is, and how often he rushes off without a moment's warning, so I was perfectly satisfied, and should have rested perfectly content for a week yet, if it had not been for your letter.

"What can we do Mr. Farrell? That is the question. Shall we inform the police, or telegraph for a detective?" And her pretty face looked towards him for help. Then, after a short pause, she asked, "Whatever does Dick mean by 'follow chrome?' Can you understand it? You must help me," she said, with a pathetic look. "What shall we do?"

Farrell listened to her appeal very quietly, but the serious look on his face had deepened.

"You may depend, Miss Sheyne," he said "that all that is within my power shall be done for the sake of my friend and your brother. No! I don't think we will trouble anyone yet. I will look round first myself, and see if I can find any clue to work upon.

"I can't make out what your brother means by 'follow chrome,' but, perhaps, when I see the laboratory I may find some explanation of the matter there. Let us go to the laboratory first of all."

Amy Sheyne assented, and they went out through the open casement, across the lawn, and under the green trees to the low, one-storey building at the end of the garden.

It was Richard Sheyne's laboratory. The door was

The door was closed, but not locked. Farrell opened it and they both entered.

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closed, but not locked. Farrell opened it, and they both entered.

The blinds were down, and a solitary Bunsen was still burning on the bench.

Farrell raised the blinds, and then started a careful survey of the whole place. Windows, bench, bottles, floor—all came in for a share of his keen observation. The bottles especially he examined most carefully. One standing on the bench near the Bunsen was empty, but it, nevertheless, claimed most of his attention.

It was labelled "Potassium Chromate." On the bench near by stood a beaker, in the bottom of which a few drops of a yellow solution still remained.

This he also examined most carefully, and tested a drop of it with another solution, which he took from the bench of reagents at his side.

It turned blood red under the test.

Then, for a long time, he remained standing, lost in deep thought, with Amy Sheyne waiting patiently at his side. He roused himself at length, and again turned his attention to the floor. Just at the foot of the bench was a tiny patch of faint yellow, and from it, leading towards the laboratory door, a faint row of splashes. Farrell opened the door and examined the path outside.

On the step were undoubtedly two splashes similar to those inside, but beyond the step nothing could be seen.

Anything that had fallen there had apparently been soaked up by the gravel.

Farrell returned to the laboratory, and emptied the reagent he had already used for testing the potassium chromate into a wash-bottle. Armed with this he again examined the path outside.

The spots on the step turned a deep blood red as soon as the solution touched them, and down the gravel path at fairly regular intervals little blobs of dark red appeared as if by magic, under the influence of Edward Farrell's wash-bottle. He apparently had found all he sought, and he returned to Amy Sheyne in the laboratory with that look of eager but suppressed excitement on his face that always characterised him when some carefully followed out line of thought had been brought to a successful issue, and presented fresh and important possibilities. There was a questioning look on Amy Sheyne's face, and he hastened to comfort her.

"I think we are on the track, now," he said, "but you must leave the rest to me. Return to the house, and be as patient as you can. I will explain afterwards, and will let you know at once if anything important transpires."

* * * * *

Left to himself, Edward Farrell made up a large beakerful of the reagent he had been using, found up a spraying-bottle from amongst Professor Sheyne's apparatus, and filled it from the beaker.

Then he carefully locked the laboratory door, and proceeded down the gravel path, examining it attentively all the way by means of the spray.

At one point the blood-red spots failed to appear, and Farrell found that they there turned to the right in the direction of a small garden gate that opened on to a quiet by-road.

He did not wait to examine all the space between the main path and the garden gate, but went direct to the pavement outside.

There, to his joy, he could distinctly see on the clean York flagging a succession of faint yellow splashes.

He followed them easily to the corner, only calling his spray into requisition when in doubt, and never did he appeal to it in vain.

Always with unerring certainty it brought up in one direction or another the dark blood-red stains.

Once Farrell had to return to the laboratory for a fresh supply of reagent from the large bottle, and, at another time, he had to wait at a rather busier street than usual for at least a quarter of an hour before he could push on unobserved.

Comparatively slow though his progress was, however, it was nevertheless sure. After traversing nearly half a mile, and working for about an hour and a half, he was at last rewarded. The splashes led him to the entrance of a rather secluded house, right on the border of the forest.

The house stood well back from the road, and was approached by a neglected grass-grown gravel path, down the first foot or two of which Farrell had no difficulty in tracing the tell-tale splashes.

When he was assured that the splashes really did lead to the house, he quietly and quickly withdrew to the corner of the street. He was convinced now that his friend, Professor Sheyne, was a prisoner in that lonely house, and that he had with a brilliant forethought managed to plan this means of tracing his prison, trusting to Farrell's own shrewdness to discover the plan.

There were many things about it Farrell could not understand; but the main thing just then was how to communicate with and rescue his friend.

He would have dearly liked to tackle the task single-handed, but for his friend's sake he wanted to make no mistake.

So, with all dispatch, he made his way to the high road, and the police-station, and told his tale to the inspector in charge. That worthy was much impressed with Farrell's story, the more so, when he became aware of his visitor's identity, and he speedily promised to do all that Farrell asked.

Two men were found up, and told off to accompany Farrell.

They each took a revolver from the police stores, and, thus armed, departed with Farrell for the suspected house. Farrell was pleased to see that they were intelligent men, and could be trusted to act promptly if occasion demanded it.

Arrived at the house, Farrell marched boldly down the gravel path with one officer, and rang a loud peal on the door-bell, the other officer, in the meantime, making his way to the back of the house as best he could, with orders to prepare for any eventualities in that direction.

The peal had hardly died away ere steps were heard inside, and someone came whistling along the hall towards the door.

The door opened, and a hasty vision was had of a well-dressed, well-set up man of about forty years of age.

No sooner did the door open enough for him to catch sight of the policeman's uniform behind Farrell, however, than he hastily endeavoured to close the door again.

But Edward Farrell was too quick for him. With a quick bound he was inside, and wrestling for all he was worth with his opponent.

The policeman followed him, and together they soon had the man helpless at their feet.

At the noise of the scuffle a door upstairs opened, and another man came hurriedly down the stairs with a

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pistol in his hand to see what all the noise was about. He was also well-dressed, like his fellow, but apparently somewhat younger.

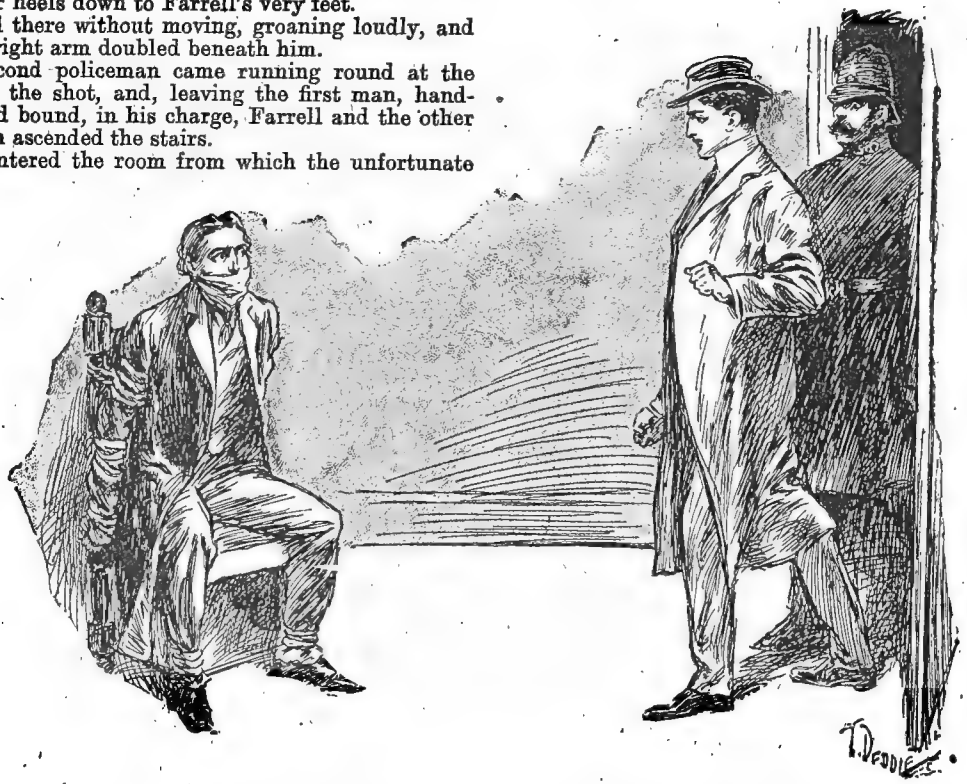
At the sight of Farrell and the policeman in the hall below, he tried to stay his hasty downward rush, with the evident intention of seeking safety above.

As he turned he hastily fired his pistol in their direction, fortunately without hurting either Farrell or the policeman, but, in the act of turning, his feet tripped in the loose carpet on the stairs, and he came head over heels down to Farrell's very feet.

He laid there without moving, groaning loudly, and with his right arm doubled beneath him.

The second policeman came running round at the sound of the shot, and, leaving the first man, handcuffed and bound, in his charge, Farrell and the other policeman ascended the stairs.

They entered the room from which the unfortunate man downstairs had emerged; and there, sitting bound and gagged against the wall, Edward Farrell beheld his friend, Richard Sheyne.



There, sitting bound and gagged, Edward Farrell beheld his friend Richard Sheyne.

Quickly they released him from his bonds, though it was some time before he could move with comfort.

"I am not surprised to see you," he said to Farrell, when the gag was removed, adding, with a smile, "that's a good compliment to you, eh?"

Then, pointing to a brown bag that stood in a partly-dried pool of yellow in the corner of the room, he asked: "Is that the clue that helped you to get here so soon? Not a bad idea was it?"

"There are several things I can't make out," said Farrell, "although most of it is pretty clear; but your sister is very anxious, and if you feel able we will return to Dalton House at once, and you can tell me your tale then." Then, to the constable at his side, "You had better fetch a doctor at once for the man downstairs, and then you and your comrade can arrange for the removal of both prisoners. I will call in at the police-station later."

* * * * *

When they were all sitting round the dining-room table at Dalton House later, and the thankful greetings of Amy Sheyne were over, Farrell turned to Sheyne, and said:

"Now, Richard, old fellow, if you feel quite equal to it I am anxious to hear your story."

"Not more anxious than I am to tell it," replied Sheyne, with a smile, "for it's one of the prettiest pieces of scientific collusion I have come across for a long while. Rogues must beware of the wiles of the scientist—eh? But to my story. You know, of course, that I have been investigating a new method of gold extraction lately. You don't know, perhaps, how eminently successful that new method is. Others do, however. How they found out I know not, but certain it is that more than one knows of its success.

"A well-known South African syndicate have already approached me for the purpose of acquiring my secret, but up to the present with no definite result.

"Well, last night, I was writing in my laboratory, when the door suddenly opened, and the two gentlemen you have captured to-day entered.

"After a certain amount of beating about the bush they came to the object of their visit, and that was my secret.

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"Naturally I refused to listen to them in any way, whereupon the younger man drew a pistol from his hip pocket, and politely informed me that to have my secret they were determined, but had anticipated opposition, and arranged accordingly.

"They further explained that they had temporarily rented a house in the neighbourhood, and suggested that it would be well for me to accompany them thither, when I could discuss their terms, and give them a practical demonstration of my process. All this, mind you, with frequent and suggestive glances at the pistol.

"I could see I was trapped. No one was likely to disturb them, as my laboratory," with a sly glance at his sister, "is regarded as sacred by all my household, and any call for help would only have meant speedy violence. Suddenly, it flashed upon me that I might trick them, if only I could communicate with you in some way.

"So as to put them off their guard, I appeared to agree entirely with their suggestion as the only thing possible for me. I then said that I was about to write to a scientific friend when they entered, and as it was a most important letter for him I should feel obliged if they would allow me to write and send it, casually remarking at the same time that, of course, they could read it to see that all was fair.

"They did not like the delay a little bit, but eventually agreed to let me have my way, and gave me five minutes in which to prepare. I dashed off the letter you, no doubt, received, and easily interpreted, for to a sceintific man it was absurdly clear, eh? and then gathered together a few chemicals to take with me. They read the letter and were quite satisfied with its genuineness, and watched me prepare a solution of chromate of potash without any suspicion, imagining, of course, that it was intended for their edification later on.

"I packed all the chemicals in the old, brown leather bag you saw in the corner of the room, but in putting in the chromate solution purposely managed to let the stopper fall out.

"Naturally, the solution flooded the bag, and came slowly drip, drip, drip, through the stitches at the bottom—supplying the track that was to enable you to trace my whereabouts.

"They suspected nothing, and imagined that I should reveal all when I reached their house.

"That, to their discomfiture, I absolutely refused to do, and they have since tried by all the means in their power to wring my secret from me by force. They were just about to try again to-day, when your opportune arrival successfully frustrated all their plans. But," turning to his sister, "did you not feel alarmed at my absence last night?"

"No," replied Amy, with a smile, "they did their work thoroughly; one of them came with a message from you, so he said, to say that you were called away suddenly for a day or two. So you see I was quite unsuspicious. I know how unaccountable you are, you know," she added, coyly.

"You haven't asked me yet," said Farrell to Sheyne, "how I managed to track the chromate so easily."

"I don't need to," rejoined Sheyne, with a laugh, "the silver stains are still on your fingers. Silver nitrate makes a fine red with a chromate doesn't it?"

Then then both laughed merrily together.

"I saw where your tracks passed a pillar box," began Farrell again, "I suppose that's where you posted my letter. But, what on earth kept you from shouting out or breaking away from those fellows when you were in the public streets?"

"Well, you see," explained Sheyne, "they were altogether too friendly and considerate. They insisted it was cold enough for a cape, and, as it might be tiring for me to walk alone, one of them took my arm. Their kindness was deceitful, however, for under the cape I could feel a pistol pressed close to my side. No, old fellow, I walked very steadily, I can assure you, I don't believe in tempting Providence."

"Well," replied Farrell, "thank Heaven you are safely through it." Then, raising his glass to his lips, he said, with a smile:

"Let us pledge our loved science, by whose aid alone we triumphed!"

[Next Week: THE RARE MINERAL.]

A Method in His Madness.

"You must be very fond of me," she murmured. "What makes you think so?" he asked in tones of tenderness. "Because you have only known me a week, and yet my little brother says that he has seen you hanging about our house every day since we became acquainted. Such ardour, I am afraid, will not last." "Shall I tell you why I have been hanging about your house during the day?" he asked, as he pressed the tiny hand which rested so lovingly and so confidingly in his own. "Tell me." "I am trying to get acquainted with the dog."

A Sudden Change.

At a drapery sale recently, two ladies got hold of what they thought to be the last pair of cheap gloves at the same moment. Each gave a pull—a long pull and a pull together. The gloves did not part, and one lady tartly remarked: "I got hold of them first." "I beg your pardon, madam, I was the first one." Then each gave another pull at the gloves. "Ladies," said the assistant, who had observed them, "we have six dozen of those same gloves." "I'm sure I don't want them," snapped one of the ladies, as she released her hold of the gloves. "They're miles too big for me," retorted the other, as she dropped them on the counter.

IN CONFIDENCE.

- - Conducted by MADGE MORRIS. - -

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.]

Can a Woman Educate Her Husband?

CAN a woman educate her husband? "Wato" puts me a question to this effect, which so reminds me of a case of a girl I know who succeeded in doing so that I think I will tell you about it. She was a very pretty girl and well bred, and positively hated anything like vulgarity. But, somehow, when her destined husband came along, he had the one fatal defect of dropping his "h's" and speaking ungrammatically. Otherwise, he was the best fellow in the world, and was well fitted by position and character to make her thoroughly happy. But to have an ungrammatical husband! The thought haunted her every time he spoke, but she was afraid to tell him of it for a long time. But at last she plucked up courage, and every time he made a mistake she would laughingly tell him of it.

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She was so very good-humoured over it, that he did not take offence at all, but still he could not bear being laughed at, and bit by bit he grew out of the habit until now he never on any account drops his "h's." I think "Wato" might try the same course, taking care to treat his little defect as a joke, and making him see his failing in much the same way as when one is told one has a smut on the nose.

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The Stage-struck Girl Turns up Again.

I VERY much sympathise with "Wallflower," who is in love with a girl who seems to be very flighty and to have little common sense. Among other things, including extravagance, she wants to go on to the stage, and nothing seems to convince her otherwise. She has spent her youth in Africa, and has only just come to England. How should "Wallflower" act? Well, I do not know of any more difficult thing than to convince a person against going on to the stage. Reasoning seems very little use in such cases, and I have seen so many friends, male and female, who drift into the lower theatrical ranks, and finally lose all touch with ordinary life, that I have almost given up the idea of ever trying to reason with them.

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The best thing would be for "Wallflower" to take his sweetheart to some of the theatrical quarters of London, and let her see just what the condition of the average out-at-elbow actor or actress is, and to tell her that these people, too, at one time thought themselves embryo Irvings and Bernhardts. If she is a vain girl, perhaps this would awaken her to common sense. At the same time, while she has stage fever, my correspondent would do well not to think of marriage.

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Be Gentle when Telling a Man you do not Love him.

MANY correspondents this week, including "S. A. L.," "Tom," and others, write to me of complications which result from their discovering, after having gone a certain distance with a friend of the opposite sex, that there is someone else they like better, and ask me how they should act. For instance, "S. A. L." finds that she loves her existing *fiancé's* brother better than himself, and Tom has fallen in love with the friend of his *fiancé*, but the former is a girl of sensitive feeling, and does not want to appear to be drawing her friend's lover from her, and matters are at a standstill.

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I am reminded of a girl acquaintance of mine who, for a long time, was on the most intimate terms with a man, but shortly after actually fell in love with someone else. She did a thing that brought on herself a great deal of abuse, but I think, on the whole, she was right. That was to write to the first man and tell him perfectly candidly that she was not in love with him, and that he was not the man she could marry. It was a terrible blow to his vanity, but the result was an extremely happy marriage between herself and the second man, which has scarcely been clouded by one quarrel. Now, had this girl been less candid, and, instead of telling the real truth about her affections, made a lot of false pretensions, instead of two beings being made permanently happy at the cost of the injured vanity of a third, all three would to this day have been, perhaps, broken lives.

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A Good Word for the "Wild" Young Man.

I AM very glad to be able to put in a word for that kind of young man who is reputed to be "wild," and "not a gentleman," and all sorts of other dreadful things. "Troubled Heart" is very fond of a young man with this kind of reputation, but, of course, if he really deserved all that was said about him she thinks she ought not to continue being friendly with him. In her company she finds him only too quiet.

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Well, "Troubled Heart," I think the kind of stories that go about concerning most of the so-called "wild" young men are often based on nothing at all. The young men of those reputations are more often than not very good fellows at heart. And as to the idea of their being "not gentlemen," that, too, is said by some about every man who breathes. The meaning of the word "gentleman" is scarcely agreed upon by any two people. If you find him a gentleman yourself, that is all you have to bother about.

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And as to his being wild, of course I can't say unless you tell me what evidence you have. But believe me that more good young men are suspected of "wildness" than one can count, and more often than not, many a wild young man is suspected of goodness. So don't let these suspicions interfere with your friendship if you really are fond of him.

John Holloway.

JOHN HOLLOWAY and Kate Warburton had been married just over a year, but, unfortunately, it could not be said that their married life was an unqualified success.

Mrs. Holloway had from the first proceeded to "lay down the law," with the result that unhappiness gradually crept in, causing them to drift further apart, instead of striving to "jog along through life together."

Mr., or Jack Holloway, as he was familiarly called, was a real good fellow, and a man, who, given a chance, would have made one of the best of husbands, and, though he adored his wife, he was beginning to see that she was taking advantage of the fact, but he was determined he would not submit to play the part of the hen-pecked husband.

The cause of all the trouble was Mrs. Holloway's self-willed and dogmatic behaviour. She loved her husband undoubtedly, but, in return, she expected so much homage and unchallenged right of action, that it made it impossible for peace to be the reigning factor in her life.

One morning at breakfast, one of the many "tiffs" over some trifle or other, was proceeding in the usual manner, and doubtful compliments were banded about, Mrs. Holloway, saying in the most decided manner, "that if she was not to be mistress in her own house she would leave," and, as Jack did not contradict her, but rather hinted that he had no particular objection to such a course, "as he was getting tired of this mode of living," this only added fuel to the fire. The outraged woman blazed forth, the language used on such occasions was freely indulged in, and the once happy courting couple were transformed into miniature demons, who looked at each other with frenzied glare.

"I tell you what it is," said Jack, "I am heartily tired of those frequent bickerings, and something will have to be done, for as far as I can see, our position is getting more painful every day."

"It is your own fault," replied his wife, looking at Jack with a withering eye, though Jack did not wither, "you are so exacting and disagreeable, there is not a thing I do, but you are ready to find a fault. You are always grumbling, and——"

"Now, look here, Kate," interrupted Jack, who was controlling himself wonderfully well, "are you speaking the truth when you make such a statement? Have I not allowed you sufficient money, and implored you to pay more attention to your domestic duties, and yet you——"

"Oh, of course, have it all your own way," cried his wife, "you always argue from your own point of view, but I tell you distinctly, I will not be bullied by a man, and you may argue till you are blue in the face, but you will never convince me that I am in the wrong."

"Will you tell me exactly what you want," asked Jack, "and I will try my best to meet you half-way, and if we could patch up matters, we might get on all right after all. Don't you think so, Kate?"

"You need not try to get over me with your soft words; if there is to be any arrangement come to, I will see to it, so don't you worry about that. Do you think for one moment that I am going to give in to everything that you say or do? Not likely, you will find that I have a spirit in me that will not be crushed by any man, far less you."

"What do you mean by that contemptuous remark?" cried Jack, whose temper was now at boiling point. "When you can stoop to using such language to your husband, it is high time there was something done in the matter, and I tell you, madam," striking the table with his clenched fist to hammer home the argument, "I tell you, madam, this will and must cease, from now, do you hear, from now, and for ever, I——"

"You——"

"Silence, woman, you have drained the last drop of patience and toleration that a man could possess. I have now done with you," and going towards the door, he cast a look at his wife, and, though he had been working at high pressure, the steam had now evaporated, and he was himself again.

"Kate." No answer.

"Would you prefer me to leave you?"

"Leave me?" she replied, with an irritating laugh, "where would you go?"

"Of course, I have not decided yet, but you know, Kate, things cannot go on in this way."

"It is your own fault."

"Thanks! I deny it."

"Oh! Just like a selfish man, always in the right, of course."

"Will you listen to reason, Kate?"

No answer.

"Well, if the worst comes to the worst," as a sudden idea had come into Jack's head to test her love, "as I am a member of the Yeomanry I am thinking seriously of going out to the Front, and ridding you of my apparently hateful presence."

"*You* go to the Front?" with a look of disdain which she suddenly checked when she saw the expression on her husband's face.

"I suppose," Jack said, "you think I have not pluck enough to carry me through?" and he smiled, bitterly.

"I have nothing to do with whether you have or have not," she replied, "but please learn to talk sense, and in the meantime," going towards the door, "I have to call on Mrs. Scott as I promised to go shopping with her, and I ask you if you consider yourself a gentleman after your brut—your—the way you have spoken to me?"

"Very well, Kate, make your own arrangements, and I will make mine."

Little did each know what was to be the end of this morning's work.

When Jack first spoke about the Yeomanry, he had no intention of putting his suggestion into force, which his wife was quick to see, and, of course, at once resolved "not to give in."

After his wife had gone, Jack began to ponder over matters. He was sure she loved him, but could not overcome the stubborn nature that had been reared in her. If he could only drag out a spark of her better nature, all might be well, but so far as he could see, it would be a difficult task.

Now, a scheme had slowly taken hold of his mind, and he resolved to put it to the test. He wrote an application to his commanding officer, volunteering for the Front, and then leaving it lying carelessly about, as though he had forgotten it, he went out to business, in anything but a pleasant frame of mind. When he returned in the evening, he glanced almost guiltily about to see if his note were still there. No, it was not.

"Ah!" he thought, "she has read it, destroyed it, and gone to weep the matter over. It will do her good, she will now see the folly of her conduct, and all will be well. My trick has done it this time," he told himself, as he smiled in the mirror, "bygones will be bygones, and all might yet end happily," then ringing the bell for the servant, he asked her if her mistress were in.

"Yes, sir, she is upstairs."

"I thought so," Jack mentally told himself. "You might please tell you mistress I will be glad to see her if she is able to come down."

"Yes, sir."

Jack stood before the fire with a happy and contented look on his face, and when his wife entered the room, smilingly, his heart beat with joy, and he stepped forward to embrace her, but to his surprise she avoided him, and the sun went out of his soul. There she stood with the old mocking expression.

"What is the matter, Kate?" asked Jack, with a look which showed his keen disappointment.

"Nothing, beyond my surprise at seeing you," she smilingly replied.

Jack's anger was rapidly beginning to rise, but he controlled himself sufficiently to say, "will you please explain?"

"I thought you were away," she said, in a manner that Jack did not know whether to laugh or not.

"Away; where to?" he asked in astonishment.

"To the Front, of course!"

Jack saw the joke at once, and laughed good-naturedly, explaining that it could not be expected he should get away in a few hours.

"Oh, indeed! How long will it take you?"

"A week or two, I should say," smiled Jack, who was beginning to enjoy his wife's manner of wheedling round him before she made the final plunge.

"Oh, you needn't smile," she said, "you wrote that letter, and purposely left it lying about, just to frighten me, but I am not so easily frightened, so I thought I would just give you a fright in return."

Jack began to feel somewhat uneasy.

"Where is the letter, Kate, or have you destroyed it?" he asked.

"No; I—I posted it to your commanding officer, as you call him. I hope he has more command over you than I have, but you need not look so dreadfully scared like, you need not have any fear of your offer being accepted, as it is men they want," and turning her back on him, she went out of the room.

Here was a pretty pickle to be in. Jack was no coward, though, at first, he had no intention of going to the Front, yet if he were accepted he would never dream of drawing back; besides, taking it all round, it was probably just the best thing to happen under the circumstances, so he told himself, yet he could not but admit that his scheme had failed, and he was in a tight corner. Then it suddenly dawned upon him, has Kate really sent off this letter, or is she only trying to frighten him, and see who was to win the game. Distracted between the two ideas, he was getting a little confused, and finally adopted the notion of going to the Club, and having a game of billiards to see if it would clear his brain.

Next day, he had occasion to again visit the Club when, as he entered the smoking-room, he was greeted with a shout of welcome. "Glad to meet you, old chap," cried Captain Drecas, of the Yeomanry, as he rose and shook Jack heartily by the hand. "I have seen your application, it is accepted, my boy, and you are all right, now we will have a good time of it. There's Teddy Laurie, Jack Hilston, Tom Bowers, and any amount of our fellows going out, and you, as a good shot and a good soldier, I am more than proud that you will be under my command. Now then, you fellows," he cried, "drink to Trooper Holloway of ours, and success to our venture."

The news was so sudden, that Jack did not feel quite such a hero as he would like to have felt, the fact was when he heard the first words his thoughts flew to his home and future possibilities.

When he arrived at his home that night, he was terribly distracted, so much so that his wife noticed there was something very far wrong.

"You are very quiet, to-night, Jack," said his wife, in a half-curious tone, "can you take me into your confidence, or are you going to treat me in your usual fashion?"

"Confidence, did you say, Kate? Confidence? What confidence has there been between us since we were married? I will tell you this, that I am going to the Front. I got the news to-day, and expect orders to-morrow to report myself for duty, *that* is the first and the last of it."

His wife turned pale and seemed like to faint, but she controlled herself, and merely remarked "we shall see."

Jack did not know that the next day his wife had gone to the commanding officer, and begged and prayed him to let Jack off.

"We do not use force, madam," was that officer's reply; "we volunteer, and your husband would be quite within his rights to withdraw his application, but I question very much if he will dream of doing such a thing, and I need not point out to you that—well, in my opinion—frankly *I* would not advise him to do so. He is a good member of the corps, and it is *men* we want."

"But couldn't you persuade him, as a married man, to give up this wild scheme?"

"It is no wild scheme, madam, *I* am a married man with a family, and I, like many others, when called upon, have responded to the call. We have a duty to perform, and we are going to do it. I sympathise with you, madam, and I admire your husband for his pluck."

When Jack Holloway received his notice to join headquarters to undergo drills and get knocked into shape before going to the seat of war, he felt glad and yet sorry. Had he got a kind word from his wife, even so far as things had gone, he would have faced matters with a lighter heart; but no, time passed on and it would soon be farewell; perhaps for ever.

At last the day arrived when the separation had to

take place, but the farewell on both sides was, outwardly, quite formal, though each at the slightest sign from the other might have given way to their thoughts. With a light kiss on his wife's cheek, Jack Holloway turned from his door and walked jauntily away towards headquarters, but though his step appeared light, his heart was heavy as lead, while his wife, if he only could have seen her, immediately his back was turned, rushed upstairs and screamed out in her agony.

When, in a few hours, the troops were formed up to take the route, headed by the band, they were marched to the station followed by an immense crowd, as a great number in the ranks were known as prominent citizens, and they did get a send off. The sound of music came to Mrs. Holloway's ears as she sat in her room crying over the past, and what might have been, and as the sounds drew nearer, and cheers rent the air, she thought what it meant for her. "If they had not parted in anger—she must have been mad to have acted as she has done."

Every note of music she heard seemed to pierce her brain. Good Heavens! they are coming this way, and will pass the house, she dare not trust herself to look out, yet she can picture his face to herself; will she ever see him again? "Oh, Jack! Jack, come to me, I have wronged you so!" Afterwards the servant found her mistress in a dead faint; but the soldiers had gone past, and one who had looked up eagerly at his own window, in the hope of seeing her whom he loved, turned his face away with a look of disappointment and misery—his last hope shattered.

Time passed heavily with Mrs. Holloway since her husband had gone, and she reviewed all that had transpired during her short married life. If she had not been so stubborn, how different things might have been. She scanned the daily papers eagerly for news of the war, and one day fainted when she saw her husband's name among the wounded, but oh, what a relief when, afterwards, she saw the word "slightly." Oh, if he only knew the agony she was suffering from her own folly. "Oh, Jack! if you are spared to come back to me, how different I will be." But why not write to him? Strange she had not thought of that, "Yes, I will do so at once, I will confess all, and we may be happy yet," so suiting the action to the thought, she sat down and begun a long letter with "My darling husband," and ending with "Your loving wife, Kate."

It was a great load off her mind, and she felt sure she had done right, but where would she address it to, and make sure he would get it. The newspaper was the only thing that she could think of for the moment, and, hearing a boy shouting "paper" in the street, she went to the door, and hailed him. "'Ere you are, mem, latest edition, great battle fought, mem, heavy losses." What was it seemed to creep over her heart. Scanning the paper eagerly, her eye fell on the casualty list, and suddenly a piercing scream rang through the house.

The servant rushed into the room, and found her mistress in a heap on the floor. She tried to rouse her, but without effect, and, nearly scared out of her senses, ran for a doctor. When the doctor entered the house, and saw the silent form, he at once pronounced life to be extinct. "Failure of the heart through sudden fright, poor girl. She is gone. She must have got a terrible shock. Ah! We may find the cause here," said the doctor, lifting the paper. "Yes, here it is."

"Killed in action."

Alan Macgregor.

MAN OR BEAST?

How a Coroner Got Confused over a Horse's Bones.

"What are the facts of this case, doctor?" asked the magistrate, as Dr. Busby entered the witness-box.

"Why, you see," said the doctor, "Mr. Jones, the coroner here, yesterday discovered a lot of old bones in the cellar of a stable which was torn down. Being a little hungry for fees, he determined to hold an inquest, and he sent for me to get a professional opinion. They were the bones of a horse, you know; and when I got there Mr. Jones had them laid out on the ground in something like the form of a man; and when I remonstrated with him, he said they were certainly the bones of a man, and he was under a solemn obligation to hold an inquest."

"You say," asked the magistrate, "that they did not resemble the bones of a human being?"

"Well, you know, he had one leg made out pretty well, but when I called his attention to the fact that the bone of the other leg ran up through the body and stuck out eight inches beyond the top of the skull, he said the man may have been peculiar, he may have been deformed. He said he had an aunt whose leg bone projected so far from her head that she had to make a hole in the top of her bonnet."

"Did he produce the said aunt?"

"No. And when I showed him that the right arm had three elbows, while the left contained no joint of any kind, and looked like the breastbone of a chicken, he said that there was a man in Peru who had eight elbows, and that his oath as coroner did not oblige him to account for all the phenomenal freaks of Nature."

"Had the remains any other elbows about it anywhere?" asked the magistrate.

"Not unless you count the joints in the middle of the back. When I pointed out that the man had a row of teeth in his shinbone, and that some of them were as big as a walnut, and showed him that for him to attempt to eat his meals with his loins, or for him to have a toothache near to his toes was in violent antagonism to all precedent, as well as to the ascertained facts about human physiology, he said the man's teeth may have been shifted by disease or something, and, perhaps, that was what killed him. He said his grandmother knew a man whose teeth slid down and began to grow upon his ribs with fatal results."

"Had he his grandmother's affidavit to that effect?"

"He neglected to produce it if he had. The skeleton's left foot was composed of the horse's breastbone. It looked as much like a foot as a clothes-pin looks like the Venus de Milo, and as the other foot was made up of about three feet of the animal's spinal column, while the neck was formed of the horse's upper jaw, I remonstrated strenuously with the coroner."

"What did he say?"

"He hit me with the horse's fibula. I retaliated with the tibula, and in about two seconds he had heaved all the skeleton at me that I hadn't heaved at him. Then he winked at the jury, and it suddenly brought in a verdict of death from cause or causes unknown; and then I had him arrested for assault and battery."

The magistrate bound the coroner over to appear at the assizes; and when that functionary had given the bond, he moved off to collect his fees for the inquest.

THE KING AGAINST DEANE.

CHAPTER I.

The Parting of Deane Brothers.

"And you think, Harvey, that this Paris journey is necessary? I mean, that *I* should make it?"

"Yes," said the senior partner, a trifle irritably. "I have already fully explained why I consider a personal interview with the officials of the *Crédit Lyonnais* to be more than desirable, in view of the crisis which threatens our firm in the near future; and why you, as its junior representative, and as such, more easily to be spared, are the fitter of the two to undertake the duty."

"Harvey," said Caworth Deane, curiously, "what is this crisis you talk about? It is the first I have heard of it. I think I know the books pretty well, and I am conscious of no impending financial disaster as being even possible."

"How about that last big lot of *Crédit Lyonnais* bonds?"

"Oh, yes! that American man—Cleeve's deposit! Well, what about it? The bonds are all right, aren't they?"

"That's just what I want to be sure about. The bonds are right enough in the way of being genuine; but I'm suspicious of Cleeve's claim to the undisputed ownership of them."

"Why didn't you tell me of this before?"

"Because I didn't think it necessary; and again, because the suspicion was only born in my own mind some half-a-dozen hours ago."

"Is that all that you fear?"

"No. This American has, within the last four days, as you are aware, drawn by arrangement with us, against the bonds to the extent of a hundred thousand pounds. From something I have heard to-day I am beginning to fear that we are in danger of losing the money; which, for Deane Brothers, would simply mean—ruin!"

"I don't quite understand," said the junior partner gravely. "If the bonds are genuine, we are guaranteed against loss, we having them in our possession as security."

"Nonsense, man! Can't you see that, if the *Crédit Lyonnais* succeed in making good their right to the bonds we shall be compelled to surrender them. The result of that will be that Deane Brothers, unable to stand the loss of the hundred thousand pounds, will have to suspend payment."

"Well, I certainly thought," retorted Caworth Deane, "that the securities we held would amply cover our credit, and to a far greater amount than that. What has become of the money? the money, I mean, which should form overwhelming assets for us?"

"Become of it! How should I know?"

"But you ought to know! Well, I am driven to an unpleasant conclusion, Harvey! and to say that I believe your luxurious, almost princely, style of living, to be at the bottom of the mischief."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say! More, I also consider your persistent endeavour to draw Eva Sheraton (against her will, I verily believe) into what you well know to be the coming muddle, is, in the highest degree, mean and contemptible."

Harvey and Caworth Deane were half-brothers; the latter—in his thirtieth year—being nearly ten years younger than the late Capel Deane's first-born. There was not a shadow of anything in common between them — physically, mentally, or morally, a fact that accounted in no small measure for all that afterwards happened.

Apparently the very pink of prosperity, the three-hundred-year-old bank of Deane Brothers, now that old Capel's hand had dropped from the helm, had, through wild and reckless speculation and extravagant living on the part of the senior partner, drifted into troubled waters.

Not a breath of this had, as yet, reached the public ear (even Caworth Deane was only *suspicious* of the truth, knowing nothing surely); so that the event, a month or two previously of a brand new customer, highly recommended by the firm's New York correspondent, was in no way remarkable.

Anyway, Silas Cleeve, of Chicago, duly deposited his hundred-and-fifty-thousand-pounds'-worth of *Crédit Lyonnais* bonds; ultimately, a few days before the brothers' talk, drawing against them to the tune of a hundred thousand.

The allusion by the younger brother to Eva Sheraton seemed to strangely agitate Harvey Deane. He rose hurriedly from his chair, and paced the little old-world bank parlour to and fro without speaking.

Suddenly, he stopped before where the other still sat, and placed both his hands upon his brother's shoulders.

"Caworth," he said huskily, and with an effort, "let us be open with one another. Do you love Eva Sheraton? Stop! don't resent the question—do you?"

"Why do you, of all men, ask me, Harvey? It isn't fair to Eva!"

"That is no answer. Yes or no?"

"I will not tell you!"

"I am satisfied!" and Harvey Deane resumed his seat at the table and commenced writing a letter.

"You will need money and credentials," he said, glancing up quickly, and ignoring altogether the subject last in dispute. "Here are both."

"It is settled that I am to go, then. Well! I will of course take the firm's credentials, but money? No—I have sufficient of my own for the purpose."

"Do as you will; perhaps it is better so."

At this moment there came a gentle knock at the door communicating with the chief cashier's room.

"Come in!" cried the senior partner.

Stephen Rutter had been in the service of Deane Brothers, man and boy, for over thirty years. He was not a particularly pleasant-looking individual. He had a trick of half-closing his eyes when he spoke, and screwing up one corner of his slit-like mouth.

Lean as a rake, and never without a pen in his hand, he was a long way from being an attractive man.

"Well, Rutter, what is it? I'm busy with Mr. Caworth."

"I beg your pardon, sir—but I should like you to

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you to look at that entry again I spoke about this morning."

"Yes, yes! I know! I'll come presently—when Mr. Caworth is gone; don't worry me now."

"Very good, sir!" said the cashier deferentially, backing out into his own domain.

The door shut, however, an ugly smile spread itself over his face.

"They're concocting flight, I'm certain, for I caught a glimpse of a circular letter in front of Harvey on the table."

Voices sounded again in the inner room. The cashier moved steathily to the door, and put his ear against it.

Then, the door leading into the private passage opened, and the spy heard Caworth Deane bid his brother "good-bye."

But Harvey Deane did not reply, at least, the listener could detect nothing.

The younger man's firm tread along the passage, the banging of the private door, his voice in the street shouting "hansom!" and Stephen Rutter climbed on to his stool again and resumed his work, with a satisfied nod of the head in the direction of the partners' room.

* * * * *

"Peters! Halliday! quick! Come here!"

Stephen Rutter was on his knees in the bank parlour beside the body of the senior partner, which lay, half turned on its side, extended on the hearth-rug.

By the dead man's side (for there was no doubt that life was extinct) lay a peculiar-looking knife, of the sort that fixes the open blade with a spring. The blade itself was smeared half its length with blood; on the handle also showing two dark crimson spots.

Peters, the second cashier, had now joined Rutter; behind him crowding the whole staff of the bank.

It was to the former that Rutter addressed himself.

"Peters," he said, laying his hand on the dead man's breast, "send at once for the police! Not a moment must be lost! This is more than murder! It is fratricide! Mr. Caworth has killed his brother!"

CHAPTER II.

"It is a Hideous Lie! I Loved My Brother!"

Caworth Deane's direction to the cabman was Upper Seymour Street, Hyde Park.

Arrived at Mr. Sheraton's he asked for Eva, and in a few seconds was standing face-to-face with her in the drawing-room.

Loving her passionately as he had done ever since he had come to know love's real meaning, he had yet never indicated by word or sign his feeling for her.

But women need no ordinary word or sign by which to read a man's devotion. So Eva.

"Caworth! Whatever are you doing in our idle part of the town at this time of the day. I warrant Harvey is hard at work!"

Her merry laugh, sparkling eyes, and dainty teasing, were so many irresistible temptations to the young man.

"I bring a message from Harvey, that's all, to say that he will be unable to go with you to the Lyceum to-night."

She, somehow, did not seem to be vastly troubled at the prospect; at least he thought so.

"Are you sure, Caworth, that that is all? He could have wired!"

"Well, Eva! I am just off to Paris on firm business, and—and—I thought I should like to—to come and say good-bye."

"Are you going for long, then?"

She certainly spoke as if she had more than a passing interest in his answer. Her colour heightened, too; and she fidgeted with her hands.

And something he saw in her eyes told Caworth Deane all he longed to know.

"Eva! Eva!" he whispered, taking both her hands in his. "Do you really care whether my absence is long or short? I believe—I am sure you do!"

She could not deny it, but though she was under no promise to Harvey Deane, she *knew* that he loved her, and she grieved to hurt him, as would she any human being.

As for Caworth, his triumph was embittered by a feeling of shame, in that he had supplanted his brother; and when, half an hour later, he drove away to his own rooms to get his travelling traps, it was as one who had done, if unconsciously, a great wrong.

It did not take him long to gather his impedimenta, and when he arrived at Charing Cross it was to find the Continental Express within five minutes of departure.

Arrived in due course at Dover, he just had time for a hurried "snack" before boarding the Calais boat.

A porter carrying his luggage in front of him, he was himself about to step upon the gangway, when a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder from behind.

"Mr. Caworth Deane, I believe?" said a man's voice quietly.

He turned his head sharply, to see a couple of men with the unmistakable cut about them of Scotland Yard.

"Yes—that's my name!"

"Well," said his interrogator, advancing a couple of steps, and putting his hand on the junior partner's shoulder, "Mr. Caworth Deane, I arrest you in the King's name on suspicion of having stabbed to death your brother, Harvey Deane, before mid-day to-day in the bank-parlour in Austin Friars."

"Good Heavens!" You can't mean it! You must be a madman! I kill my brother!"

"I regret the necessity, Mr. Deane, but here is my warrant!"

"I will not look at it! I tell you man, it is a hideous lie! I *loved* my brother!"

CHAPTER III.

A Creature of Circumstance.

The case of Caworth Deane, the banker, taking his trial upon a charge of murder—the murder of his brother, Harvey Deane—was more than a nine-days' wonder.

Ever since the prisoner's committal City men talked of nothing else; and it was curious that the majority were in the accused's favour.

A portion of the Press, as usual, pre-judged the case, and, on the facts, proclaimed Caworth Deane a criminal of the very worst type.

Those, however, who had charge of him, bore witness to his marvellous calmness and quiet determination to trust in the ultimate triumph of his innocence.

"Why," said he to his solicitor, the morning before the trial, "Harvey and I were one. Disagreements we may have had on business matters—but serious quarrels—never! Of one blood, by our father, we never let the fact that we were not of one mother come between us for an instant."

At the outset of the trial it transpired that the day after Harvey Deane's death Stephen Rutter disappeared.

This, however, did not affect the issue, as the prisoner acknowledged that the knife found by the body was his,

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though he distinctly averred that he remembered lending it to Stephen Rutter the day before at the latter's request. That he did not return it, he would swear.

Peters, the second cashier, gave evidence, which went to prove that Rutter, immediately after the lunch hour, had summoned himself and the rest to the partners' room, and that the chief cashier had thereupon denounced Mr. Caworth Deane as the murderer of his brother.

The younger's contemplated hasty journey to Paris was insisted upon by the prosecution as unanswerable evidence of guilty flight.

The lending of the knife to Rutter was commented upon as being nothing else than an attempt to shift the guilt on to the absent cashier.

Then the prisoner's counsel made a remarkable request.

"Would the court adjourn the case till the next morning at ten o'clock, as he believed that by that time he would be in possession of facts which would establish Caworth Deane's innocence.

The judge was not one over-given to dock favour, and would probably have refused to grant the appeal for delay, but for that which he read on a slip of paper, passed up to him by the counsel for the defence.

"Adjourned till to-morrow morning at ten."

* * * * *

Before Caworth Deane was brought into court his counsel made a statement which fell upon everybody as a "bolt from the blue."

This was nothing less than that Stephen Rutter, the ex-chief cashier of Deane Brothers had confessed, before his death, the day before in Paris, in a street omnibus collision, that it was he who had, in the lunch hour, stabbed Harvey Deane, leaving by his victim Caworth Deane's knife, as a damning witness against the latter.

For years he had been robbing the bank, manipulating the books in such a way as to deceive the senior partner, who, to a large extent, was innocent of criminal waste and speculation. Whatever of the latter had been unwisely entered into had been done upon Rutter's advice; he, Harvey, being entirely in the cashier's hands, so far as technical business knowledge was concerned.

His plunder conveyed out of the country, Rutter sought, in the greedy spirit so common among men of his sort, to get the *Crédit Lyonnais* bonds into his hands. Hence his visit to Paris, *en route* to the West.

"The one to get this confession," said counsel, "was Miss Eva Sheraton, a young lady deeply interested, he might say, in the prisoner's welfare; and if his lordship would now order Caworth Deane's presence in court, he would put Miss Sheraton into the box, and let her tell her own tale."

This she did to the satisfaction both of judge and jury.

She told how her suspicions were aroused by Rutter's disappearance, and how, from a suggestion dropped by the second cashier, Peters, she decided to go to Paris, in company with her father, and to watch the offices of the *Crédit Lyonnais*.

Two omnibuses came into collision opposite the *Crédit Lyonnais* building, and in an injured passenger she recognised Stephen Rutter.

Having him conveyed to a hospital she, through the British Embassy, gained permission to nurse the man, whom the doctors from the first decreed would die.

Die he did, but not before she had succeeded in persuading him to confess both to Harvey Deane's murder, and to the mal-appropriation of the bank's funds.

"A very clever and courageous young lady!" conceded his lordship; "but an undesirable precedent, for all that."

"Deane Brothers" is only a City tradition now, although when the bank's affairs were wound up, everybody received twenty shillings in the pound.

Mr. and Mrs. Caworth Deane live with the latter's father somewhere in the North, where the echoes of feverish City life are seldom heard, though the terrible experiences of those few days last year will never be quite forgotten by either of them. Ralph Enderby.

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE.

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

CHAPTER XXVI.
Reparation.

PRESENTLY as I recalled what talks we had had, and one in particular from which it now appeared to me that her coldness had sprung, a light seemed suddenly to break upon my mind, as perchance it hath long ago broken upon the minds of those who may happen upon these pages, and whose wits in matters amorous are of a keener temper than were mine.

I who in all things had been arrogant, presumptuous, and self-satisfied had, methought, erred for once through over-humility.

And indeed, even as I sat and pondered on that June day, it seemed to me a thing incredible that she whom I accounted the most queenly and superb of women should have deigned to grant a tender thought to one so mean, so far beneath her as I had ever held myself to be.

Things came to pass that night as I had planned, and the Fates which of late had smiled upon me were kind unto the end.

Soon after ten, and before the moon had risen, a silent procession wended its way from the Château to the river. First went Montrésor and two of his men; next came the Chevalier with Mademoiselle, and on either side of them a trooper; whilst I, in head-piece and back and breast of steel, went last with Mathurin, the sergeant, who warmly praised the plan I had devised for the conveyance of M. de Canaples to Paris without further loss of time.

Two boats which I had caused to be secretly procured were in readiness, and by these a couple of soldiers awaited us, holding the bridles of eight horses, one of which was equipped with a lady's saddle. Five of these belonged, or had belonged, to the Chevalier, whilst the others were three of those that had brought the troop from Paris, and which I, in the teeth of all protestations, had adjudged sufficiently recovered for the return journey.

The embarkation was safely effected, M. de Canaples and Mademoiselle in one boat with Montrésor, Mathurin and myself; the sergeant took the oars; Montrésor and I kept watch over our prisoner. In the other boat came the four troopers who were to accompany us, and one other who was to take the boats, and Montrésor in them, back to Canaples. For the lieutenant was returning, so that he might, with the remainder of the troop, follow us to Paris so soon as the condition of the horses would permit it.

The beasts we took with us were swimming the stream, guided and upheld by those in the other boat.

Just as the moon began to show her face our bow grated on the shore at the very point where I had intended that we should land. I sprang out, and turned to assist Mademoiselle. But disdaining my proffered hand, she stepped ashore unaided. The Chevalier came next, and after him Montrésor and Mathurin.

Awhile we waited until the troopers brought their boat to land, then when they had got the snorting animals safely ashore, I bade them look to the prisoner, and requested Montrésor and Mathurin to step aside with me, as I had something to communicate to them.

Walking between the pair, I drew them some twenty paces away from the group by the water, towards a certain thicket in which I had bidden Michelot await me.

"It has occurred to me, Messieurs," I began, speaking slowly and deliberately as we paced along, "it has occurred to me that, despite all the precautions taken to carry out my Lord Cardinal's wishes—a work at least in which you yourselves have evinced a degree of zeal that I cannot too highly commend you to His Eminence—the possibility yet remains of some mistake of trivial appearance, of some slight flaw that might yet cause the miscarriage of those wishes."

They turned towards me, and although I could not make out the expressions of their faces in the gloom, yet I doubted not but that they were puzzled ones at that lengthy and apparently meaningless harangue.

The sergeant was the first to speak, albeit I am certain that he understood the less.

"I venture, M. le Capitaine, to think that your fears, though very natural, are groundless."

"Say you so?" quoth I, with a backward glance to assure myself that we were screened by the trees from the eyes of those behind us. "Say you so? Well, well, mayhap you are right, though you speak of *my* fears being groundless. I alluded to some possible mistake of *yours*—yours and M. de Montrésor's—not of mine. And, by Heaven, a monstrous flaw there is in this business, for if either of you so much as whisper I'll blow your brains out!"

And to emphasise these words, as sinister as they were unlooked-for, I raised both hands suddenly from beneath my cloak, and clapped the cold nose of a pistol to the head of each of them.

I was obeyed as men are obeyed who thus uncompromisingly prove the force of their commands. Seeing them resigned, I whispered softly, and in answer there was a rustle from among the neighbouring trees, and presently two shadows emerged from the thicket. In less time than it takes me to relate it, Montrésor and his servant found themselves gagged, and each securely bound to a tree.

Then with Michelot and Abdon following a short distance behind me, I made my way back to the troopers, and feigning to stumble as I approached, I hurtled so violently against two of them that I knocked the pair headlong into the stream.

Scarce was it done, and almost before the remaining three had realised it, there was a pistol at the head of each of them, and sweet promises of an eternal hereafter being whispered in their ears. They bore themselves with charming discretion, and like lambs we led them each to a tree, and dealt with them as we had dealt with their officers, whilst the Chevalier and his daughter watched us, bewildered and dumfounded at what they saw.

So soon as the other two had crawled, all unconscious of the fate of their comrades, out of the river, we served them also in a like manner.

Bidding Abdon and Michelot lead the horses, and still speaking in my assumed voice, I desired Mademoiselle and the Chevalier who had not yet sufficiently recovered from his bewilderment to have found his tongue, to follow me. I led the way up the gentle slope to the spot where our first victims were pinioned.

Montrésor's comely young face looked monstrous wicked in the moonlight, and his eyes rolled curiously as he beheld me. Stepping up to him I freed him of his gag, an act which I had almost regretted a moment later, for he cleared his throat with so lusty a torrent of profanity that methought the heavens must have fallen on us. At last, when he was done with that.

"Before you leave me in this plight, M. de St. Auban," quoth he, "perchance you will satisfy me with an explanation of your unfathomable deeds and of this violence."

"St. Auban!" exclaimed the Chevalier.

"St. Auban!" cried Yvonne.

And albeit wonder rang in both their voices, yet their minds, I knew, went different ways.

"No, not St. Auban," I answered with a laugh and putting aside all counterfeit of speech.

"Good Heavens! I know that voice," cried Montrésor.

"Mayhap, indeed! And know you not this face?" And as I spoke I whipped away my wig and mask, and thrust my countenance close up to his.

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"Thunderation!" ejaculated the boy. Then, "By Gad," he added, "there is Michelot! How came I not to recognise him?"

"Since you would not assist me, Montrésor, you see I was forced to do without you."

"But St. Auban!" he gasped. "Where is he?"

"In Heaven I hope, but I doubt it sadly."

"You have killed him?"

There and then, as briefly as I might, I told him, while the others stood by to listen, how I had come upon the Marquis in the Château the night before, and what had passed thereafter.

"And now," I said, as I cut his bonds, "it grieves me to charge you with an impolite errand to His Eminence, but——"

"I'll not return to him," he burst out. "I dare not. Good Heavens, you have ruined me, Luynes!"

"Then come with me, and I'll build your fortunes anew and on a sounder foundation. I have an influential letter in my pocket that should procure us fortune in the service of the King of Spain."

He needed little pressing to fall in with my invitation, so we set the sergeant free, and him instead I charged with a message that must have given Mazarin endless pleasure when it was delivered to him.

The Chevalier de Canaples approached me timidly.

"Monsieur," quoth he, "I have wronged you very deeply, and this generous rescue of one who has so little merited your aid truly puts me to so much shame that I know not what thanks to offer you."

"Then offer none, Monsieur," I answered, taking his proffered hand. "Moreover, time presses, and we have a possible pursuit to baffle. So to horse, Monsieur."

I assisted Mademoiselle to mount, and she passively suffered me to do her this office, having no word for me, and keeping her face averted from my earnest gaze.

I sighed as I turned to mount the horse Michelot held for me, but methinks 'twas more a sigh of satisfaction than of pain.

Three days later we arrived at Nantes, and a week from the night of the Chevalier's rescue we took ship from that port to Santander.

That same evening, as I leant upon the taffrail, watching the distant coast line of my beloved France, whose soil it seemed I was not like to tread again for years, Yvonne came softly up behind me.

"Monsieur," she said in a voice that trembled somewhat, "I have indeed misjudged you. The shame of it has made me hold aloof from you since we left Blois. I cannot tell you, Monsieur, how deep that shame has been, or with what sorrow I have been beset for the words I uttered at Canaples. Had I but paused to think——"

"Nay, nay, Mademoiselle, 'twas all my fault, I swear. I left you overlong the dupe of appearances."

"But I should not have believed them so easily. Say that I am forgiven, Monsieur," she pleaded; "tell me what reparation I can make."

"There is one reparation that you can make if you are so minded," I answered, "but 'tis a lifelong reparation."

They were bold words indeed, but my voice played the coward and shook so vilely that it bereft them of half their boldness. But, ah, Heaven, what joy, what ecstasy was mine to see how they were read by her; to remark the rich, warm blood dyeing her cheeks in a bewitching way; to behold the sparkle that brightened her matchless eyes as they met mine.

"Yvonne!"

"Gaston!"

She was in my arms at last, and the work of reparation was begun whilst together we gazed across the sun-gilt sea towards the fading shores of France.

If you be curious to learn how, guided by the gentle hand of her who plucked me from the vile ways that in my old life I had trodden, I have since achieved greatness, honour, and renown, history will tell you.

THE END.

When Should a Woman Do Her Shopping?

SHOULD a woman do her shopping in the morning, during the afternoon, or should it be delayed till the lamps are lighted, and the evening shadows have merged into the blackness of night? Sometimes the latter course is the only one available on account of illness, but Bile Beans for Biliousness will save women this inconvenience as they did for Mrs. W. Maiden, of Oakfield Avenue, New Street, Brierly Hill, Staffordshire. Here is Mrs. Maiden's experience as she told it to a *Brierly Hill Advertiser* reporter:—"From being a girl I have suffered from biliousness up to a few months back when I was cured by Bile Beans. At the age of fifteen, I was terribly bad; and up to less than a year ago I have many a time been in such a worn-out, ragged state on account of biliousness and headache, that I have had to go to bed completely done up. This has often occurred on a Saturday, and I have been unable to stir out to do my marketing until nine o'clock at night. Indeed I got so bad that I was nearly always in pain. The nasty bilious feeling, the headache, and the weakness were really fearful. My appetite left me altogether, and the very thought of food made me sick. Even being in bed only gave me temporary relief, and when I got up to try and do a little work I was soon as bad as ever. Nothing that I took seemed to do me good, until one day my nephew brought me a small book, saying 'Aunt! here is something which will do you good!' He read to me some of the cures which Bile Beans had worked, and after I had heard them I decided to try Bile Beans. I got some from the chemist, and the result of persevering with them has been marvellous. I am not like the same woman. I never feel bilious, and the headache which tortured me so has also disappeared. You may tell how healthy and well I am now when you hear that I can do my washing and housework with ease. Washing for our family is a heavy task, as there are seven of our own at home, and I took to three motherless children. Yet I can do the work with ease, and never have the languid, used-up feeling I always had before when not suffering actual pain. Bile Beans are alone responsible for this splendid change in me, and I have not only recommended them to several persons, but have given a number away." Not only for biliousness and headache, but for all female ailments, indigestion, liver and kidney disorders, constipation, piles, debility, nervousness, anæmia, colds, chill, rheumatism, skin eruptions, pimples, blotches, face disfigurements, blood impurities, and as a preventive of influenza, Bile Beans for Biliousness are unequalled. All chemists stock them, or you may obtain them direct from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120 London Wall, London, E.C., by sending price, one and three halfpence or two and nine. Their use will prevent ill-health, rendering such night shopping, as in the above case, altogether unnecessary.

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Preparation.

Ethel (who thinks her country cousin nervous): "Can't you find anything better to squeeze than a felt hat?" Country Cousin: "Wait a bit. I'm only reducin' my energy, for fear I might hurt you."

She'd Tried the Other Way.

Mamma: "Gracious, child! don't carry the cat by the tail!" Little Edith: "But, mamma, if I carry her by one arm like you do me, she tries to bite me."

Hardly Necessary.

Auntie: "You should ask to be excused when you leave the table." Little Nephew: "Should I? I thought, from the way you acted about that third piece of pie, that you'd be glad to see me go."

What He Could Do.

"Now," said the warder to the forger who had just arrived at the prison, "we'll set you to work. What can you do best?" "Well, if you give me a week's practice on your signature I'll sign your official papers for you," said the prisoner.

A Good Reason.

"And what are you going to make of your son, Smithers?" asked the vicar. "A shoemaker, like yourself?" "Oh, no, sir," was the reply. "You see, he's uncommon fond of animals, and so we thinks of making him a butcher!"

She was in Demand.

Female Mendicant: "I'm a poor widdy woman with eight children. Can you give us some clothes?" Lady: "The only clothing I have to give away is one of my husband's coats." Female Mendicant: "Give it to me, lady; I might marry again. There are several gentlemen as have their eyes on me."

Those Bargains Again!

"But, my dear," protested Mr. Young when Mrs. Young showed him her purchases for the day, "why have you bought four dozen clothes pins when all the washing is done at the laundry?" "Oh, Harry, how can you be so horrid?" began Mrs. Young tearfully. "Why, they were bargains."

It Didn't Always Agree.

"This climate doesn't agree with me very well," remarked the passsenger with the cough. "Well, to tell the truth," responded the chance acquaintance in the next seat, "there are times when it disagrees with me, too, in the most provoking and ridiculous manner. I'm the man who makes the official weather predictions."

The Fall of Man.

Mr. Stebbings: "Statistics go to show that the male proportion of the world is fast falling off." Mrs. Stebbings: "Gracious me! Isn't there some way of tying them on?"

What Papa Said.

The Sister's Beau: "So, Johnnie, you're going to be a chemist like papa, eh? And did you know this diamond of mine was the same substance as charcoal?" Johnnie: "No." T. S. B.: "And hasn't papa told you that?" Johnnie: "No. He said it was paste."

Getting Out of Danger.

Nervous Passenger: "Why are you steaming along at such a fearful rate through this fog?" Ocean Captain (reassuringly): "Fogs are dangerous, madam, and I am always in a hurry to get out of them."

Very Distant.

"Let me see," said Brown to Jones, "isn't this Jones that we were talking about just now a relative of yours?" "A distant relative," said Jones. "Very distant?" "I should think so. He's the oldest of twelve children and I'm the youngest."

Never Again.

Mr. Pott: "I'll be cook myself, my dear, rather than I'll set foot in a servants' registry office again. I went there to-day, and picked out the most respectable-looking woman in the room, and stepping up to her said: 'Can you fill the position of cook?' 'Sir,' she replied, 'I'm trying to fill that of our coachman, and I think you would suit admirably.'"

A Silenced Girl.

"You need not deny it, I know that he kissed you while you were sitting on the steps last night." "Yes, mamma, eight or ten times, I fancy." "Eight or ten times! Why—I—you——" "Yes, mamma, dear, I told him the first time if he did it again I wouldn't speak to him, and after that I could not tell him to stop without breaking my word. And I knew you would not want your daughter to tell a fib."

He Wanted an Introduction.

Jack: "I have a chance to marry a poor girl whom I love, or a rich woman whom I do not love. What would you advise?" George: "Love is the salt of life, my friend. Without it all else is naught. Love, pure love, makes poverty wealth, pain a joy, earth a heaven." Jack: "Enough. I will marry the poor girl whom I love." George: "Bravely spoken. By the way, would you—er—mind introducing me to the rich woman whom you do not love?"

IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING

to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed.

If you want to know what sort of a person you are send a specimen of your handwriting to

RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.,

inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

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ASTHMA

WHY ? ? is it generally thought that there is no cure for

ASTHMA, CHRONIC BRONCHITIS, SHORTNESS OF BREATH, EMPHYSEMA, BLOOD-SPITTING, *HAY FEVER, etc.*

BECAUSE ! ! the usual treatment only confine themselves to combating single symptoms instead of attacking the root of the disease.

BE SURE THERE IS ONE

ABSOLUTE LASTING CURE.

SUFFERERS WILL RECEIVE POST FREE

FREE OF CHARGE.

particulars of the famous WEIDHAAS HOME TREATMENT when applying to THE PAUL WEIDHAAS HYGIENIC INSTITUTE, 16 T.A. Buckingham Rd., Brighton.

£1,000

The DIRECTOR is prepared to pay the above sum to any Charitable Institution if the testimonial in this advertisement is not a genuine extract from the patient's own letter.

Professor Weidhaas has tried the Treatment on himself, after having been given up as incurable, and cured himself, and had then practised it for over 19 years in many thousands of special cases. Many having suffered for over 40 years have been cured by this Treatment (in some instances even at the age of 70 or 80 years), after having been

GIVEN UP AS INCURABLE.

PROF. WEIDHAAS.

No interference with daily occupation. Send description of complaint, and mention if you suffer from **COLD FEET.** Read the following Testimonial, one out of thousands received:

BRONCHIAL ASTHMA OF THE WORST SORT AND EMPHYSEMA CURED. (Eight Years' Standing.)

When Mr. J. Walton applied for the treatment he wrote: "I suffer from Asthma or Bronchitis. I cough and spit a lot of phlegm, and I am very weak. By any exertion I am out of breath, and puff and blow as if I had been running a race. Up to eight years ago I had been full of walk and strength, but I was attacked with influenza, and from then to now I have never been well. At night I am struck with cramp in my feet. I have lost about 30lbs. during the last seven or eight years." After the treatment he writes: "It is two months since I discontinued your treatment for Bronchial Asthma of the very worst sort, and now I am as well as ever I was in my life. I can walk 30 miles a day without being much tired. It is the safest, the best, and most natural treatment in the world."—JOHN WALTON, Barrowford. (Full address on application.)

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THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

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GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

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BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

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Every Man suffering from Varicocele and its consequent nervous exhaustion speedily relieved and cured by the most advanced and rational method of treatment yet introduced. An Illustrated Circular giving full particulars and testimonials showing successful cures, sent free in a sealed envelope.—S. S. NORTON, 59 and 60 CHANCERY LANE, LONDON, W.C. Established over 30 years. Consultation Free.

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In patent air-tight tins. ¼lb., 1/4; 1lb., 2/4; 2lb., 4/- including tin & postage.

MRS. CONYERS,

Morchard Bishop,

DEVON.

MONEY IN IT!

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DEAL DIRECT AND SAVE ONE-HALF

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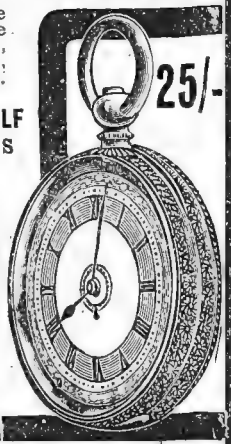
"ACME" PATENT LEVER 25/-

SOLID SILVER CASES, BEAUTIFULLY ENGRAVED FINE ¾-PLATE MOVEMENT, JEWELLED, DUST AND DAMP-PROOF CAP, FITTED WITH H. SAMUEL'S LATEST IMPROVEMENTS. PATENT, NOT OBTAINABLE IN OTHER WATCHES. SENT WITH KEY, INSTRUCTIONS, WRITTEN WARRANTY, AND BONUS GIFT ON RECEIPT OF P.O.O. 25/-.



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HEADACHE.

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All Leading Chemists sell KAPUTINE, 1/-. Samples One Penny.

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Cures

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FREE TO THE RUPTURED

Wm. Kidd (*from a Photo*)

GLENFONDLAND, HUNTLY, ABERDEENSHIRE.

Mr. KIDD having cured himself of Rupture by Dr. Rice's method, desires others to know of this new cure. **A free sample** and books will be sent to any afflicted person that writes to

Dr. W. S. RICE,
(57) 9, Stonecutter St.,
London, E.C.

AN END TO SKIN TROUBLES.

READ THIS LETTER

From a sufferer who has been cured by "ANTEXEMA," written entirely of his own part, out of gratitude for a happy release from suffering. Mr. Robert Dawson, of 89 Albert Street, Gateshead-on-Tyne, writes:

"I received your sample bottle of 'ANTEXEMA,' for which I do not know how to thank you. After suffering untold torture for three weeks, the first dressing that I put on relieved all the burning—which was like someone burning with a hot iron—and I had what I had not been used to, a good night's rest. After the sample bottle was used, I got a 1/1½ bottle, and thank God it is now cured. If ever there was a genuine article advertised for the benefit of the public—'ANTEXEMA' is one—and worth five times what you charge for it."

This letter is one of many like it, which we have on file, and can be seen at any time. If you are a sufferer from *any form of skin trouble*, write for a free trial sample of

"ANTEXEMA"

sent post-paid by return, together with valuable treatise on the skin, in plain wrapper, or get a bottle from your chemist, price 1/1½ and 2 9. Refuse injurious substitutes. The Antexema Co., 83 Castle Road, London, N.W.

It is a story so simple, so uneventful, that it is hardly a story at all, and it all turned on a blot of ink.

At the age of twenty-five I was neither more foolish nor more sensible than most young men, and I was the victim of a violent passion for Laura Preval, a pretty actress. She was several years older than I, and, like most of her class, fond of admiration from those about her. I was one of a train of young men who sought her, obeying her slightest gestures as mandates from a queen.

One day, moved by some latent sense of independence, I revolted at a service I was asked to perform. We quarrelled; Laura had a violent temper, and in spite of the thousand follies I had committed for her she said she never wanted to set eyes on me again. Calling all my pride to hide my despair I pretended that such would indeed be my pleasure and I left her, determined to take myself and my wounded love away from London.

Then I thought of my grandmother's place in the country. It was many years since I had been there, and without sending any notice I packed my trunk and left London. I was not unhappy, for I counted on my absence doing for me what my presence could not. Laura would miss me, her self-love would be hurt at seeing how well I could live away from her, and in a few days I would receive a perfumed note bidding me "return."

How surprised they all were to see me when I came upon them in the beautiful drawing-room after dinner. There was grandmother, my aunts, and a houseful of young cousins, whom I had not seen since they were babies. I kissed them all, and found myself before a tall slim girl whom they told me was Natalie.

"What! This little Natalie!" I cried and kissed her, too. The next moment I felt a stinging slap on the side of my face and drew back.

"Natalie," said my grandmother, reproachfully, "Clarence is your cousin."

"I don't care if he is," said the girl, angrily, rubbing her cheek with her handkerchief; "I'm not going to be kissed by every impudent fellow who chooses to call himself my cousin."

"I shall never do so again from choice," I replied. "So far as I am concerned the relationship is dissolved."

"It is much better. I do not wish any ill-bred person for a cousin."

Grandmother interrupted and I walked away, thinking what an ill-tempered, disagreeable person I was to be in the same house with.

I had left my address in London. Letters and papers were sent to me, but not the letter I was looking for. The days passed and I grew restless and miserable, watching always for the arrival of the letters and suffering fresh disappointment each time.

My cousin Natalie interested me a little, but it was more curiosity than anything else. She seemed to be made up of so many different moods. To the others she was gentle; to grandmother she was sweet and considerate; to the children, gay and happy. Once I surprised her sitting in a great chair before the log fire, and the expression of her whole face and figure was one of sadness.

There was something charming in the mixture of childishness and womanliness in the face the firelight played upon, and I sighed to think of the friend she might have been to me if she had not taken such violent offence at my cousinly tribute.

My sigh aroused her. She looked round, saw me, and the expression vanished from her face to give place to the usual one when I was by—dislike and scorn.

All this time I was becoming so wretched over the silence of Laura that Natalie must have noticed it, for she began to treat me with a little kindness. I met her half-way and soon our feud was forgotten and we were, though not intimate, to an extent friendly.

Three weeks passed. I could endure it no longer. I would write to Laura, taking all the blame for what was her fault and asking her pardon. It was hard, but I could not be an exile any longer. I sat down at the library table, and wrote all my despair, my love, my hope, everything that youth puts into such letters was there: excuses, promises, vows. It would be a stony heart that would not melt at such an outpouring. I reached the end at last, and signed my name, when, terrible misfortune! my pen slipped and the page was decorated with a great blot of ink!

I uttered an exclamation. How could I write it over again? Copy those sentences that had been written in my heart's blood? I searched wildly for something to take out the spot, and at that moment Natalie entered.

"Natalie!" I cried, "haven't you got something to take out a blot of ink? An eraser, or a knife, or something?"

"Yes," she answered, hurrying to my relief. She opened a drawer and took out a little pearl-handled knife. "Let me do it for you. I can do it beautifully."

Her offer was made in kindness, and I willingly relinquished my place to her. She placed her hand over the writing with great care, so as to conceal it, and then went to work on the paper. I stood behind her. What little hands she had! The sun slanted in at the window and caught her hair in a ruddy gleam, lighting up little fine threads of pure red gold. How soft and fine it looked! I thought of another head, bleached and coarse. I felt a sudden desire to tell Natalie that she was all that a lovely girl should be, when she sprang up and faced me.

"If I had known it was that kind of letter I wouldn't have helped you!" she cried.

"If I had not trusted in your honour I wouldn't have accepted your help," I replied.

Her eyes blazed and she cried, in a voice which broke at the end:

"I—I couldn't help seeing. My hand slipped a little and then a little more—and I saw the end. I—I think you might have told us you loved somebody else——" She stopped, the anger faded away and she stood gazing at me with reproachful eyes. Then there was a quick little sob and she fled from the room.

In a conflict of feeling I had never before experienced I snatched the letter from the table and tore it across, and then again and again. Throwing the scraps in the fire, I spent the rest of the afternoon hunting the house for Natalie, and at last I found her.

The sight of a blot of ink always causes my heart to swell with thankfulness.

W. Werner.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 61—66," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, March 17th, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 61. PROVERB MAKING.

The following letters, when re-arranged, will form a well-known proverb:

A E H II LL N OOOO P SS TTTT

No. 62. TRANSPOSED LETTERS.

My 12345 is a dark-coloured stone.
14532 is to plunder,
43251 are short stories.
14325 is hard.

No. 63. PUZZLE.

Explain the following:

A 5
C 4
A 104.

No. 64. DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

A town in Great Britain, a lake in Italy, a town in Prussia, a town in England, the scene of a famous battle, a province in France, a town in England, a town in Scotland.

My initials read downwards give the name of an English county, and the finals give the name of a town in that county.

No. 65. CHARADE.

Past yonder lowly cottage door
A handsome knight rode by;
He rein'd his steed and breath'd soft vows—
For ah! my FIRST was shy.

But soon his pleading prayer was heard,
His heart did leap to see
My SECOND placed upon my first,
Who sighed, "I'll go with thee."

Tho' hoary time went swiftly by,
They loved so fondly through;
For in my WHOLE she wedded him—
A husband good and true.

No. 66. WORD SQUARE.

Form a double word square from the following letters, the connecting word of which is a well-known city of the British Empire:

AAAA E HH II LLLLL NN OOOOO PP
RR TTTTT Y

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 37 to 42.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded to Miss M. Connell, of 27 Maidenhead Street, Hertford.

A pencil-case has been forwarded to each of the following:

E. Friend, 65 Eastern Road, Romford.
E. Marshall, Kingston-by-Sea, Brighton.
J. Jones, 11 Langdon Place, Swansea.
S. J. Bailey, 3 Grove Terrace, Stoke Fields, Guildford.
G. Humphreys, 19 Colville Street, Nottingham.
Mrs. Carlisle, 421 Newport Road, Middlesborough.
Mrs. Clark, 32 Beauval Road, Dulwich Rise, S.E.
D. G. Jelley, 3 Cantwill Road, Plumstead.
H. Daws, 7 Hampden Terrace, Lockwood Street, Hull.
M. W. Daws, 7 Hampden Terrace, Lockwood Street, Hull.

SOLUTIONS.

37. HOODWINK.

38. A miens
S evern
P reston
A ral
R hine
A rarat
G lasgow
U mballa
S enegal—ASPARAGUS.

39. EARTH
ADORE
ROBIN
TRIER
HENRY

40. D-well. W-hip. C-h-arm. A-corn. S-w-itch. T-rain. T-r-ice. T-rifle.

41. The letter I.

42. He stopped for an instant, twisting the branch he held with nervous strength, then finished with a shake in his voice, "I hoped in spite of all, Julie, that I'd made you think of me just a little more kindly."

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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CAPTAIN KETTLE

AS HE IS

In the MARCH

PEARSON'S

6D.

GET YOUR COPY EARLY.

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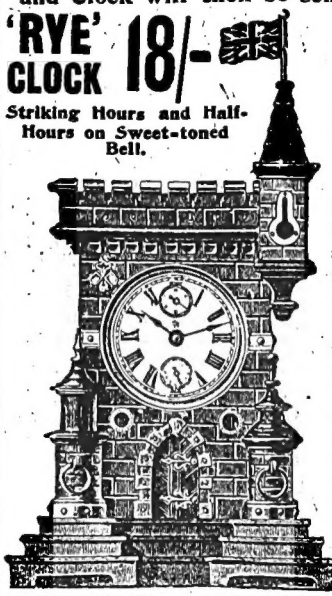


Fitted with LEVER MOVEMENT, Real Oak Cases, Brass Mounts and Flag, Enamel Dial; Goes in any position like a watch; Height, 12 inches; Width, 7 inches; Depth, 5 inches.

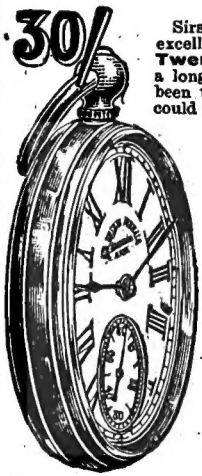
Sent to any address on approval on receipt of **2/-**

IF Clock is approved of, send us 2/- a month for eight months—18/-

OR if you send the full amount at once, we will send you a **Free Gift** for cash of a "BADEN-POWELL" POCKET-KNIFE, value 2/- Cash returned in full if Clock is not approved of, and is returned to us at once.

AFTER TWENTY . . . SEA VOYAGES . . .

30/-



22 Earl Street, Hastings.

Sirs,—The watch I bought from you still goes excellently, and has been in constant use through **Twenty Sea Voyages**, long and short, and a long sojourn in the Australian Bush, and has been thoroughly dependable. A better watch I could not desire.

Yours, etc., T. H. TAYLOR.

MASTERS' PRIZE MEDAL WATCHES

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